



**2017 Higher Education  
Symposium for Teacher Educators**

**CONFERENCE MONOGRAPH**

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# PREFACE

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The challenges facing Christian education—from PreK through 16—are myriad and complex. From institutional sustainability concerns to questions of teaching and learning in a digital and so-called “post-Christian” age, addressing these challenges will require wisdom (James 1:5, 3:17). The Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) aims to help educators in this effort by serving as a convener and catalyst for the Christian education movement.

To this end, in May of 2017, around 35 teacher educators from Christian colleges and universities across the United States gathered in Colorado for the biennial ACSI Higher Education Symposium. For two-and-a-half days, participants discussed these issues as they relate to teacher preparation. Presenters shared how they are not only considering these challenges in regard to their own programs, but also are readying their students to address them in their own careers as educators.

Ten of these presenters have shared their insights in this resulting monograph, which has been organized into three sections:

- 1. RESEARCH** Three papers share the results of research studies on Christian teacher preparation. These include an exploration of *ProEthica*'s suitability for the Christian college and university context (Bose, Klamm, and Smith), a study of cross-cultural skills growth in an international teaching practicum (Tyner and Graber), and findings from a cultural historical immersion experience for pre-service teachers (Ginn).
- 2. PROGRAM DESIGN** Five papers explore program design in Christian teacher preparation, including: programmatic ways to equip pre-service elementary teachers to meet struggling learners' needs (Lederhouse and Morrison); the use of edTPA data to improve field experiences (Imig); public-private partnerships to enact practice-based teacher preparation reform (Linton); promising practices in online teacher education (Lohmann and White); and methods for preparing students for overseas teaching (Williams).
- 3. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES** Two papers examine theoretical perspectives of Christian teacher preparation, including growth mindset as a framework for preparing 21st-century educators (Black and Bethge) and “Kingdom education” as a comprehensive lens for teaching and learning in Christian education (Cox).

It is the authors' prayer that the insights in this monograph will be a blessing to faculty and administrators at Christian colleges and universities, and particularly to those engaged in the high calling of preparing the next generation of Christian educators.

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# ***ProEthica: Advancing Teacher Candidate Ethics Assessment from Theory to Practice in Christian Contexts***

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## **Abstract**

In recent decades, accreditation standards have required teacher education programs to establish and implement dispositions that define and assess affective beliefs and values integrated within the teacher preparation process. The 2015 publication of the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC) Model Code of Ethics for Educators sought to unify the application and assessment of dispositions relating to integrity and social responsibility through a national referendum. In response, Educational Testing Service (ETS) developed an online program, *ProEthica*, to challenge individual teacher candidates and school leaders to explore potential-risk scenarios in an effort to produce self-reflection regarding legal ramifications when making school-based ethical decisions. *ProEthica* is currently being embraced as a licensure component by some state departments of education. Researchers conducted a pilot program, integrating *ProEthica* as a component in a graduate and an undergraduate foundations class in the spring of 2017, to assess the value of using *ProEthica* as a practical extenuation of its dispositions. Analysis of the data found *ProEthica* principles and indicators for leadership and for pre-service candidates—though written from secular ethical and moral perspectives—to be aligned with the Christian university’s worldview and dispositional values and beliefs. The use of *ProEthica* offers the Christian university an evaluation tool that does not compromise but rather augments its biblical identity, while enabling it to meet state and national teacher and leadership training mandates.

## ***ProEthica: Advancing Teacher Candidate Ethics Assessment from Theory to Practice in Christian Contexts***

Given the enormous moral problems facing our international society, there is much public dialogue about the need for schools to do more about the moral education of our children. Contemporary surveys reveal that most of society believes that schools should be active participants in the formation of character of our youth. (Staudt 2001, 55)

If schools are to be active participants in youth character development, logic would dictate that teacher training programs at the university level should incorporate values and ethical instruction as integral aspects of their programs. Theoretical models by Murrell, Diez, Feiman-Nemser, and Schussler (2010), Serdyukov and Ferguson (2011), Cummins and Asempapa (2013), and Richard Osguthorpe (2013) provided foundational and applicative support for such a values emphasis. State and national accreditation agencies, in response, initially directed efforts to restructure teacher training and assessment, requiring integration of dispositional character traits within the traditional curricular elements of knowledge and pedagogy. Faith-based colleges and universities found scriptural support for inclusion

of dispositional emphasis in the model of Jesus, the Master Teacher, noting that He taught knowledge (Luke 4:32), used instructional skills (Matthew 7:28, 29), and applied His teaching to the development of character in His pupils (Hebrews 4:15). Within the literature, though, institutional leaders commonly expressed concern as to whose values, principles, and beliefs should be emphasized, and upon what authority should the qualities be based. Determining and measuring dispositional beliefs, due to their subjectivity, posed the greatest challenges.

Ruitenbergh (2011) proposed moving the argument of dispositional measurement subjectivity away from the faith arguments by stating, “A teacher-educator does not necessarily have the right to know all the beliefs of a teacher candidate, but they do have every right to know how the teacher candidate is likely to act in professional situations, including ways in which candidates may be required to act in ways incongruous with personal beliefs” (43). Ruitenbergh’s view proposed the use of ethical dilemmas and social issues, intertwined with daily school life potential entanglements, to build the value of dispositions as prevalent in the thinking of teacher candidates and to provide an element of objectivity in assessment. In so doing, use of situations requires prevalent thinking in teacher candidates, while providing an element of objectivity, through legal case history, for measuring candidates’ moral character qualities.

Among examples of resultant measurement processes was Educational Testing Service’s *ProEthica* training and assessment program, which is being adopted by many state departments of education and university teacher preparation programs. *ProEthica* is an exercise in normative ethics, a moral reflection about what ought or ought not to be done in proposed real-life situations (2017). Craig (1991) defined moral reflection as questioning if “violating a social rule is always wrong” and “What do I do if social moral rules conflict?”

With the use of state-mandated programs like *ProEthica* as evaluative assessment practices for dispositional instructional impact, two critical questions must be asked by faith-based teacher training programs. First, can ethical assessment programs, such as *ProEthica*, be used in alignment with the Christian university’s biblical mission, vision, and philosophical worldview? And second, are proposed situational dilemmas, assessed by the program’s relativistic ethics responses, counterproductive to established values espoused in Scripture-based dispositions? Seeking answers to these questions, the participating university conducted a field-based *ProEthica* pilot program in foundation courses at the undergraduate and graduate levels. This report provides a review of the literature, findings of the pilot field study, and concluding thoughts regarding implications for faith-based schools of education.

### **Literature Review: Ethics Training in Teacher Preparation Programs**

Many professions, including law and medicine, have long been self-regulated by a professional code of ethics. While a critical topic for leaders of all professions, ethics is perhaps even more imperative for educational leaders because educators serve as role models for students and parents in the communities they serve (Cranston, Ehrich, and Kimber 2003; Lashway 1996; McEwan 2003; Northouse 2015; Sergiovanni 2009). Dewey referred to this belief as the moral purpose of schooling (Bowen, Bessette, and Cham 2006). The field of education, however, has struggled with establishing a universal ethical code.

The eighteenth-century Swiss educational reformer Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi has been credited as ushering in the conceptual importance for teacher preparation programs. His ethical code was simple: love the students and do not use corporal punishment (Smith 2014). While Pestalozzi’s influence foundationally led to formalizing teacher training, his impact did not transfer to a formalized code of ethics. In the early twentieth century, Bennion (1927) called for development of a formalized moral code, but in 1994, Oser (as cited in Campbell 2008) lamented “that no clear and sound rationale guides teacher education ... and that prospective teachers do not acquire a moral vocabulary” (372). Ethics for educator preparation came into the mainstream in the mid-1990s (Shapiro and Stefkovich 2016). With the turn of the century, the impetus of global societal needs increased pressure for education to address the perpetual call

for an educational code of ethics. Staudt (2001) proposed that teacher educators must stress to prospective candidates the value of a virtuous life, a view of teaching as a moral act, and practices that use inquiry teaching and learning to bring students to an understanding of causal reasoning.

Starratt's foundational research (2004) proposed a framework for educational leaders including the ethic of justice, the ethic of critique, and the ethic of care. Building on this model, Shapiro and Stefkovich (2016) added the ethic of the profession in their multiple paradigm approach. Others proposed additional dimensions to the framework, such as Furman's ethic of community (2003) and Robbins' ethic of culture (2006).

In response to research, scholars began to advocate the teaching of ethics in educator preparation at the university level (Shapiro and Stefkovich 2016). Others questioned if ethics could be learned as part of university programs since ethics is intertwined with a person's own belief system (Langlois and Lapointe 2010). Some even opposed the teaching of ethics, citing numerous hindrances to including it as part of the curriculum (Bowen et al. 2006). Campbell (2008) expressed concern regarding a modern trend of teachers moving away from being moral agents toward being activists for social justice. Campbell lamented that "when teachers come to believe that the ethics of their profession relate more to how they can serve wider political agenda as social reconstructionists than to how they should monitor their daily practice and duties to their own students, their moral agency is compromised" (374–375).

Pushing aside the theoretical questions of ethics teaching and application, professional organizations emphasized the importance of ethical codes and national standards for educational leaders. The decision of the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA) to devote an entire standard to ethics signified ethics as a key component to be addressed in teacher preparation. NPBEA's Standard 2 in the 2015 Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL) stated, "Effective educational leaders act ethically and according to professional norms to promote each student's academic success and well-being" (10).

The final action to make ethics an emphasis in educator preparation was an important first step, but standards and professional codes serve only as valuable "guideposts" (Shapiro and Stefkovich 2016). Ethical codes or standards alone are insufficient to train aspiring leaders (Lashway 1996) as ethical codes are rooted in accountability instead of professional responsibility (Cranston 2013). The new ethics assessment movement, recognizing this concern, sought to develop a means to measure candidates' understanding and decision making related to professional ethics through hypothesized scenarios. From this commission, the method utilized in Educational Testing Service's *ProEthica* training and assessment program was created and implemented.

### **Development of MCEE and *ProEthica***

*Development of MCEE.* Concerned about inconsistencies among teacher preparation programs regarding professional ethics, the Education Testing Service (ETS) hosted the 2012 Educator Ethics Symposium (*ProEthica* 2017).

Recommendations from the 2012 symposium led ETS to initiate a movement that would transcend the assessment solely of knowledge and skills. The recommendations included the following:

- Development of a national code of ethics for educators
- Pre-service and in-service instruction aligned with a national code
- Licensure assessment of candidate knowledge related to the national ethics code and of regulatory frameworks (*ProEthica* 2017)

These recommendations led ETS, in conjunction with University of Phoenix and the National Association of State Teachers of the Year, to sponsor in 2014 the development of the Model Code of Ethics for Educators (MCEE) (McCabe and Davis 2015). In 2015, the MCEE was adopted by the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC n.d.). Five baseline principles were adopted (Model Code n.d.):

**Principle I: Responsibility to the Profession.** The professional educator is aware that trust in the profession depends upon a level of professional conduct and responsibility that may be higher than required by law. This entails holding educators to the same ethical standards.

**Principle II: Responsibility for Professional Competence.** The professional educator is committed to the highest levels of professional and ethical practice, including demonstration of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required for professional competence.

**Principle III: Responsibility to Students.** The professional educator has a primary obligation to treat students with dignity and respect. The professional educator promotes the health, safety, and well-being of students by establishing and maintaining appropriate verbal, physical, emotional, and social boundaries.

**Principle IV: Responsibility to the School Community.** The professional educator promotes positive relationships and effective interactions with members of the school community, while maintaining professional boundaries.

**Principle V: Responsible and Ethical Use of Technology.** The professional educator considers the impact of consuming, creating, distributing, and communicating information through all technologies. The ethical educator is vigilant to ensure appropriate boundaries of time, place, and role are maintained when using electronic communication.

For each of the principles listed above, the MCEE provides from 15 to 23 indicators that serve to demonstrate the principle. There are 86 total indicators.

*Development of ProEthica.* With the Model Code in place, ETS developed a product aligned with MCEE that would instruct candidates in MCEE principles and assess candidates in their ethical decision-making skills. The online, module-based program requires candidates to navigate a series of video-based interactive scenarios, participate in scaffolding practice exercises, and take an assessment that would provide a score for each module. Activities were based on real-life situations experienced by educators. In the assessment process, candidates are provided not only the opportunity to make choices but also to consider the possible consequences of those choices. These are the seven modules (*ProEthica* 2017):

**Module 1: Introduction.** Explores the relationship between the dispositional, ethical, and regulatory frameworks as they apply to educator decision making and conduct.

**Module 2: The Professional Educator.** Identifies the educator's responsibilities to the profession.

**Module 3: The Professional Educator and the Student.** Identifies the educators' responsibility to establish and maintain appropriate verbal, physical, emotional, and social boundaries with and regarding students.

**Module 4: The Professional Educator and the School.** Addresses how educators promote effective and appropriate relationships and interactions with members of the school community while maintaining professional boundaries in and outside of the school building.

**Module 5: The Professional Educator and the Community.** Identifies how educators must reflect the values of the profession as members of the community.

**Module 6: Ethical Decision Making for the Professional Educator.** Provides a simulation-based activity in which educators will examine long-term consequences of short-term decisions. Completion of this module requires them to apply what they have learned in previous modules as well as in this one.

**Module 7 (for Leadership Candidates Only): Leadership and the Professional Educator.** Identifies a leader’s responsibility to establish and foster an ethical and professional culture within a school by examining some of the unique ethical challenges leaders face.

Upon completion, candidates download a certificate of completion as evidence of proficiency in the MCEE principles.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

The *ProEthica* pilot in the present study was conducted with two sets of participants: (1) graduate students enrolled in an educational leadership foundations course; and (2) undergraduate teacher candidates enrolled in a general foundations of education course. Data included the results of participant scores for each module, written reflections from individual participants, and notes from focus group discussions.

**Data Analysis for Leadership Candidates**

Leadership participants included 18 graduate students enrolled in a foundations course for educational leaders. They participated in the *ProEthica* Pilot Program over the course of one semester. Of the 18 students, six were male and 12 were female; 14 of them were in the Administration and Supervision Program for principal preparation; three were in the Reading Specialist Program; and one student was in the Teaching and Learning Program. The participants held a variety of current positions with 15 in a K–12 school, one in a preschool, and two in a university (see Table 1).

**Table 1: Leadership Candidates: Demographics**

Category		Frequency n = 18	Percent
Gender	Male	6	33.3%
	Female	12	66.7%
Program	Administration	14	77.8%
	Reading Specialist	3	16.7%
	Teaching & Learning	1	5.6%
Position	Teacher	9	50.0%
	Reading Interventionist	1	5.6%
	Behavior Specialist	2	11.1%
	Math Coach	1	5.6%
	Preschool Director	1	5.6%
	University Staff	2	11.1%
	Substitute Teacher	1	5.6%
	International Student Coordinator	1	5.6%

**Quantitative data analysis for leadership candidates.** The *ProEthica* Program for Educational Leaders consisted of seven online modules. The first module was an introduction. The remaining six modules provided knowledge about how to respond ethically in a variety of school-based scenarios. Each module concluded with a summative assessment. The summative assessment consisted of multiple-choice questions related to ethical scenarios. Participants had to complete the assessment before moving on to the next module. The mean, median, mode, and standard deviation of the class on each assessment is included in Table 2. Participants scored the highest on the module entitled “The Professional Educator and the School” (M = 92.13) and the lowest on the module for “Leadership and the Professional Educator” (M = 86.11). Overall, participants performed well on the *ProEthica* module assessments, indicating that students were able to answer questions correctly about ethical situations by applying concepts learned throughout the training.

**Table 2: Leadership Candidates: Mean, Median, Mode, and Standard Deviation of the Module Quizzes**

Module	M	Mdn	Mode	SD
2: The Professional Educator	88.43	91.67	91.67	10.81
3: The Professional Educator and the Student	88.89	91.67	95.84	11.79
4: The Professional Educator and the School	92.13	91.67	91.67	8.54
5: The Professional Educator and the Community	90.74	91.67	91.67	9.17
6: Ethical Decision Making for the Professional Educator	90.28	91.67	100.00	8.45
7: Leadership and the Professional Educator	86.11	91.67	91.67	11.45
Overall Student Average on Total Modules	89.43	90.98	93.06	5.56

**Qualitative data analysis for leadership candidates.** After completing the *ProEthica* course, participants completed a reflection template to summarize each of the modules, contemplate what they learned, and compare the content of *ProEthica* with the university’s dispositions and biblical worldview. Summarily, participants noted several positive features of the *ProEthica* program such as real-life scenarios ( $n = 10$ ), emphasis on decision-making skills ( $n = 6$ ), ethical guidelines to follow ( $n = 5$ ), and the ability to practice ethical scenarios before facing them on the job ( $n = 3$ ).

*Leadership candidate perspectives on dispositions.* Participants noted that the training, to various degrees, aligned with the university’s dispositions of social responsibility, commitment, reflective practice, integrity, and professionalism—referred to on campus as the acronym SCRIP. The concept for the acronym was developed from the belief that life dispositions teachers should display are rooted in Scripture, the internal character qualities produced by fruit of the Spirit described in Galatians 5:22–23. All participants ( $f=18$ ) stated the *ProEthica* training focused on the dispositions of integrity and professionalism. Seventeen participants noted that the *ProEthica* training aligned with the disposition of social responsibility. Participants added that the dispositions of commitment and reflection were not explicitly mentioned in *ProEthica* but they believed the two were indirectly related.

*Leadership candidate perspective on biblical worldview.* Participants noted that while *ProEthica* was not based on the Bible, it matched moral principles found in the Bible such as honesty and integrity. Others reported that *ProEthica* aligned with a biblical worldview because it placed students and their needs first. A few participants noted a conflict between the training in *ProEthica* and the biblical command to show compassion and care for others. For example, one participant stated, “If any part of the *ProEthica* course may not have aligned with a biblical worldview, it would be in the way the course addressed every issue as if human compassion should be put aside for the regulatory framework.” Another participant echoed this sentiment: “I believe God would want you to help those students that are struggling with emotional needs and to help them see Him through those situations, but I understand that, because of rules and laws within the school system, this is not really ethical in this setting.”

**Data Analysis for Teacher Candidates**

Teacher education participants included 44 undergraduate students enrolled in a foundational course for pre-service teachers. As with the graduate students, they also participated in the pilot over the span of one semester. Of the 44 students, seven were male and 37 were female. See Table 3.

**Table 3: Teacher Candidates: Gender**

Gender	Frequency n = 44	Percent
Male	7	15.9%
Female	37	84.1%

*Quantitative data analysis for teacher candidates.* The *ProEthica* program for teacher candidates contained six modules. Module 7, which focused solely on school leadership issues, was not included. The context for enrichment activities in the teacher candidate version targeted training for pre-service teachers, but the scenarios themselves were identical and the practice activities were very similar. Table 4 reports the mean, median, mode, and standard deviation for teacher candidates. Teacher candidates scored the highest on the module entitled “The Professional Educator and the Community” ( $M = 94.70$ ) and the lowest on the module “The Professional Educator and the Student” ( $M = 89.21$ ). The median score for four of the five modules assessed was 83.33—the exception being for Module 5, which focused on the community. In summary, teacher candidate results were higher than those of the leadership candidates; however, teacher candidates did not complete Module 7, which resulted in the lowest scores for the leadership participants.

**Table 4: Teacher Candidates: Mean, Median, Mode, and Standard Deviation of the Module Quizzes**

Module	M	Mdn	Mode	SD
2: The Professional Educator	89.58	83.33	100.00	11.10
3: The Professional Educator and the Student	89.21	83.33	100.00	9.94
4: The Professional Educator and the School	92.24	83.33	91.67	7.50
5: The Professional Educator and the Community	94.70	87.50	100.00	7.21
6: Ethical Decision Making for the Professional Educator	94.57	83.33	100.00	7.47
Overall Student Average on Total Modules	92.05	79.17	100.00	9.02

**Qualitative data analysis for teacher candidates.** Teacher candidates completed the same reflection template as the leadership candidates.

*Teacher candidate perspectives on dispositions.* Undergraduates agreed overwhelmingly with the graduate students that all of the SCRIP dispositions were reflected in *ProEthica*, whether explicitly or implicitly. They also agreed that the two that were not as explicit but were certainly implemented were commitment and reflective practice. Others, however, noted that all five dispositions were integrated throughout, whether explicitly stated by the same term in SCRIP or by implicitly requiring the display of the disposition throughout the decision-making processes. For example, one student stated, “Different words were used, but the same ideas were maintained.” Another student commented, “Reflective practice was not explicitly mentioned during this program, but the fourth module’s scenario involved the reflection of another educator’s methods.” (Ironically, it seemed to be lost on some undergraduates that the entire exercise of resolving the *ProEthica* scenarios and of reevaluating their choices was an application of reflective thinking.)

*Teacher candidate perspectives on biblical worldview.* In focus groups, the undergraduates discussed specific biblical principles evident in the various modules and identified the following alignment with specific Scriptures:

**Module 2:** “In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us” (Titus 2:7–8, NIV).

**Module 3:** “The integrity of the upright guides them, but the crookedness of the treacherous destroys them” (Proverbs 11:3, ESV). “For we aim at what is honorable not only in the Lord’s sight but also in the sight of man” (2 Corinthians 8:21, NIV).

**Module 4:** “The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me’” (Matthew 25:40, NIV).

**Module 5:** “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen” (Ephesians 4:29, NIV). “Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things” (Philippians 4:8, NIV).

**Module 6:** “Abstain from all appearance of evil” (1 Thessalonians 5:22, KJV).

## Implications

The historical strength of biblically based universities has been their ability to instruct candidates in faith, morals, and ethics. These universities continue to face theoretical, philosophical, and biblical concerns when state and national secular organizations seek to address societal issues through licensure and accreditation mandates, potentially threatening fundamental changes in program emphasis. The pilot project in this study provides an initial examination as to *ProEthica's* possible validity as an ethical teaching and assessment component in the curriculum. While *ProEthica* is written from a secular worldview, the principles and indicators appear to complement the biblical worldview and dispositional emphasis already practiced in faith-based universities.

An important point of divergence in this regard, however, is one indicator that states, “Respecting ... the uniqueness of perceived gender, gender expression, gender identity ... sexual orientation ...” (p. 17). *ProEthica* itself might currently have complementary agreement with biblical worldview, but it most likely will face revisions. Since it is based on MCEE, the wording and emphasis on gender issues could possibly be more prevalent in later iterations of *ProEthica*. Continued study is recommended to determine the breadth of agreement and functional use of *ProEthica* in this and other faith-based colleges and universities.

## Conclusion

At the outset of this research, two questions were paramount. First, can ethical assessment programs, such as *ProEthica*, be used in alignment with the Christian university's biblical mission, vision, and philosophical worldview? And are proposed situational dilemmas, assessed by the program's relativistic ethics responses, counterproductive to established values espoused in Scripture-based dispositions? Analysis of results from the pilot study of *ProEthica*, at the leadership and the teacher candidates' levels, indicated a positive alignment with the university's worldview and dispositional values and beliefs. Researchers also found agreement with *ProEthica's* engagement of participants in case study scenarios to be an effective approach to teaching and assessing ethical problem-solving skills. For the faith-based university, though, *ProEthica's* value is not in being a stand-alone ethical instructional methodology. Integration of the *ProEthica* program becomes valuable as an extension of an already-established biblical foundation embedded within its curricular emphasis. As an application activity, the use of *ProEthica* in its current formulation enables the Christian university to utilize an evaluation tool that meets state and national agendas, while upholding and augmenting its biblical identity.

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# A Qualitative Study of Cross-Cultural Skills Growth: An International Teaching Practicum in the Philippines

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Three groups of Taylor University students have traveled to Manila, Philippines, for month-long international teaching practicum experiences; the practica took place in January 2014, 2015, and 2016. The students were accompanied by education department chair Cynthia Tyner and her husband, Stan Tyner; they partnered with Kids International Ministries. The purpose of this study was to explore the cross-cultural growth of pre-service teachers who participated in the trips. This study sought to follow up on previous results from a quantitative study, by conducting qualitative personal interviews in order to create a holistic picture of the various factors that greatly impacted student cross-cultural skill growth. Offering unique opportunities and extracurricular activities for the students, this program is but one example of an opportunity to facilitate cross-cultural skill growth through an international teaching practicum experience.

## Background Literature

### The Philippines

Manila is the capital city of the Philippines and is home to 11.5 million people. While Filipino is a primary language in the Philippines, English is a prominent language as well. Approximately 95% of the population (ages 15 and over) is literate. Around 83% of the population holds a Catholic identity. The Philippines as a country is a demographically young nation. Approximately one-third of the population is under the age of 15. Just over 50% of the population is under 24 years of age. The median age of an individual living in the Philippines is 23.5 years (Central Intelligence Agency 2015).

### Taylor University

Taylor University is a small, private, Christian liberal-arts institution located in the rural community of Upland, Indiana. Taylor has an established history of sending students abroad, both during the traditional semester and during an interterm for the month of January. Taylor's undergraduate population is just under 2,000 students, with approximately 57% female and 43% male (Taylor University 2014).

### International Field Experiences

International field experiences are a large part of academic programs for many American universities. Overall, students who go on such trips seem to be greatly impacted by their experience and have been observed to grow both personally and professionally. In a study by Pence and Macgillivray (2008), students were interviewed after a month of teaching in Rome, Italy. Students who participated in this qualitative study reported that they were given the opportunity to experience an unfamiliar culture and curriculum, giving them a broader understanding of international educational methods through their international practicum experience.

However, with an increase in the number of international trips, some are raising concerns regarding the impact on the local communities to which the practicum students are traveling. Two apprehensions to sending students on international service trips are meeting the needs of the host community and the burdening of locals hosting the visiting students, particularly in impoverished countries. Faculty who plan the field experiences are also noticing it is important that universities grow and maintain a relationship with the organizations that host students (Amaya-Burns et al. 2010).

### **Cross-Culture Growth Development**

The literature from the field of student development has increasingly emphasized cross-cultural growth in recent years. By the end of their undergraduate experience, students should be able to interact with ideas and cultures different than their own. Moreover, graduates should be able to use their understanding of other cultures to broaden their thoughts on a variety of topics. King and Baxter Magolda (2005) establish a matrix in which three dimensions (cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal) are examined at three levels of development (initial, intermediate, and mature). Dimensions existing in an “initial” phase are seen in students who close themselves off to different points of view and associate only with those who are similar to them. This closing off can be in respect to knowledge (cognitive), the values of others (intrapersonal), and the potential for relationships (interpersonal). By way of contrast, students who are mature in their intercultural development are able to use multiple cultural frames to constructively challenge their beliefs, consider their effect on society at a large scale, and seek diversity within their social circles.

Traveling abroad is widely considered to be an effective way for students to grow in their cross-cultural development. Often, students who are studying abroad are better able to reflect on their home culture, think critically about their own beliefs, and understand how their culture impacts their thinking. Through challenging their understanding of culture, students are able to more effectively communicate cross-culturally. Such confrontation of preconceived notions allows students to develop the ability to approach a topic from multiple perspectives and to look past their initial beliefs (Mahon and Cushner 2002).

### **Quantitative Study**

Funded by the Spencer Centre for Global Engagement at Taylor University, Dr. Steve Snyder and his psychology research students conducted three annual quantitative studies assessing “intercultural developmental change in students who taught abroad” (Sinclair and Snyder 2014). The studies assessed students on the Intercultural Development Scales (IDS), Taylor University Core Values, and the Taylor University Common Learning Objectives (CLO). The IDS intercultural competencies are as follows: Total Knowledge; Total Awareness; Total Attitude; Total Behavior; Total Intrapersonal; Total Intellectual; Total Interpersonal; and Total Spiritual. Taylor University Core Values are: Liberal Arts Grounded; Christ Centered; Biblically Anchored; Whole Person Focused; Servant Leadership; Vocationally Equipped; and World Engaging. The Common Learning Objectives are as follows: Spiritual Activity; Critical Thinking; Competent Communication; Aesthetic Literacy; Civic Mindedness; Responsible Stewardship; and Lifelong Learning (Burrows, Ferro, and Zandee 2015). Thus, the measures utilized in this study were comprehensive in nature to span academic, spiritual, emotional, and physical experiences.

The three quantitative studies demonstrated cross-cultural skill growth and net gain means from pretests to posttests that were statistically significant in most areas of the quantitative study. The present qualitative study sought to expand on the quantitative results in effort to discover what experiences and elements of the teaching practicum trip developed and grew students’ cross-culture awareness and skill growth (Burrows, Ferro, and Zandee 2015; Ferro and Ha 2016; Sinclair and Snyder 2014).

## Methodology

Utilizing a qualitative approach, this study explored student cross-cultural experiences through personal interviews in order to discover the determinants of students' personal and spiritual growth during the practicum experience. Following the results of quantitative studies that measured cross-cultural skill growth by means of the Taylor University Intercultural Inventory pretests and posttests, this study sought to gain a qualitative perspective of the impact of an international experience on cross-cultural awareness as compared with a domestic experience in order to complement the quantitative data. The results of this study helped researchers to determine what factors have the greatest impact on cross-cultural awareness found through both quantitative and qualitative research.

## Participants

A total of 31 individuals from the three international practicum trips to the Philippines participated in one-on-one interviews over the course of two years. Seven were male and 24 were female. Twenty-eight were elementary education majors while three were secondary education or educational studies majors. Participants were classified as sophomores, juniors, or seniors. Twenty-nine participants were White and two were Asian-American. It is important to note that five participants had completed the practicum two times, consecutively. All participants were between the ages of 18 and 23, with a mean age of 20.25 years.

## Design

Approximately 65 individuals were contacted via email for voluntary participation in the study. The volunteers were then interviewed for approximately ten to fifteen minutes in a faculty office. The interviews were focused on the individual's personal cross-cultural experience and growth achieved, based on self-reflection.

The results of the Intercultural Inventory informed the protocol, allowing the qualitative interviews to target factors and experiences that contributed to cross-cultural development. Since the study examined practicum experiences from two consecutive years, comparisons were made between cohort one and cohort two. While this education practicum has existed for several years, only recently has the Intercultural Inventory been administered to participants.

## Procedures

Participants were provided with an informed-consent form to sign to confirm their continued participation in the study. Following a series of demographic questions, participants were individually interviewed utilizing a semi-structured protocol. The interviews were audio-recorded for analysis purposes. Following the interviews, the audio recordings were transcribed by a researcher, coded, and themed for reoccurring factors related to cross-cultural awareness development.

## Analysis

Utilizing Taylor University's research through the Spencer Centre for Global Engagement, the quantitative data was used to corroborate student's personal reflections. The researchers took the qualitative and quantitative data, comparing and contrasting across a two-year period. The researchers looked for common themes in the qualitative data in order to measure cross-cultural awareness, growth, competencies, and acceptance in terms of development.

## Results

When asked if their experiences made them more culturally competent, all participants responded affirmatively. Throughout the participant interviews, several themes emerged as to what impacted participants in terms of personal reflection on cross-cultural growth development: exposure to poverty; gaining skills; relationships; and desire for future travel.

## Poverty

A majority of participants (n = 22; 71%) described how being immersed into an impoverished country and seeing poverty as they had never seen it before impacted their views of other cultures and other peoples.

A subtheme was the experience the participants had with a lack of teaching resources, specifically technology, forcing the participants to become more creative in their teaching lessons (n = 17; 55%). A participant observed:

One thing I noticed too was the lack of resources—paper, glue, scissors. But also realizing that learning was still taking place and the teachers didn't even know that much about teaching, but the kids were still learning and I think it allowed me to see a whole different view of teaching ... just realizing that teaching can look so different depending on where you are.

Many participants described creating their own posters, handwritten copies of worksheets, and other visual aids. Without the assistance of common technology found in schools in the United States, participants found themselves confronted with a daunting task each night of preparing for the next day's lessons.

A second subtheme that developed was related to the participants coming to appreciate what they have, a recognition of their own wealth comparatively, and, at times, a feeling of guilt for privilege and wealth (n = 15; 48%). In seeing how little the Filipino children had, many participants were deeply moved and struck by an understanding of how much they take for granted on a daily basis.

The joy of the Filipino people despite their poverty was the third subtheme (n = 10; 32%). The participants expressed being highly impacted by joy in such circumstances as they viewed the Filipino families whose children attended the Christian school. Several participants described their desire to be more joyful despite ill circumstances. One participant reflected:

... just the joy that these kids had, I mean they're always laughing, always joking around, and I think that is a very positive thing for a community, even despite the fact that they didn't have anything. They may have owned three shirts, maybe; they're playing basketball in flip-flops. But they're laughing, and joking around, and having a good time and making the best of what they have. And that makes the community so much more inviting, so much happier I guess. Even though they may be lacking in other things, they definitely did not lack in joy, and that was really cool to see and that was something I took back is just [a] joyful attitude, joyful look on life, accepting circumstances, being content, but also, I guess striving for more at the same time.

The participants expressed conviction regarding the fact that they can express a joyful and grateful attitude, despite the circumstances they encounter.

The hospitality and generosity of the Filipino people, despite how little they possessed, affected many participants as well (n = 10; 32%). One participant told this story:

The first week, [in] the mornings, they mostly just taught in Tagalog, so I would literally have no idea what was going on. So I picked up a history, a Filipino history book, and the first chapter was all about the Filipino culture, what they stand for, what they value, and one of the things talked about [was] the joy and the happiness despite, you know, they have a lot of poverty, and it also said that the Filipino people are willing to go into debt just so that their visitors feel welcomed. And it was one of those moments like, "Wow. What am I doing for my visitors? I'm not even willing to clean my dorm room sometimes." These guys are literally willing to give all they have and more just so that I, who's there for three weeks, feel welcome. And it was like, okay, that was one thing I took back with me is you know the impact we can have on welcoming people into our lives or into our space is astronomical.

Regardless of their poverty, the Filipino families gave gifts to the participants, welcomed them into their homes, and displayed kindness to the students, regardless of the participants being wealthy foreigners. Participants described this genuine display of kindness as motivating in considering how they exhibit hospitality and generosity to others.

The final subtheme that emerged centered on the additional activities students participated in while on the practicum trip, such as volunteering at a home for victims of human trafficking and sexual violence, the orphanage, or playing basketball with street children (n = 11; 35%). One participant described how volunteering after school instilled a desire in her to return to the United States and

... be more involved in the community, to see where your students come from to be able to help them outside of the classroom and realizing [school's] not their whole entire lives and I think being in the Philippines definitely gave me more of that perspective because we had the opportunity to go see where they're from and to go help them in a bigger sense than just in their education.

These activities enhanced the participants' experience in providing them with additional interactions with the Filipino people, particularly those who have been marginalized.

### **Gaining Skills**

Participants pointed to three specific skills that they gained as a result of participation in the experience. First, participants referred to gaining confidence in building cross-cultural relationships, as well as confidence in teaching as a result of the international practicum experience (n = 19; 61%). Second, participants emphasized how the language barrier impacted their experience, challenging the participant to relate to his or her students in the classroom despite limited vocabulary (n = 18; 58%). One individual recalled,

Throughout the day the teacher would be teaching in Tagalog and it was hard because I actually had no idea what she was saying. So that was the first time that I experienced being a minority, but also realizing that even though there were cultural differences, I realized how much at the same time, even though, they value other things and it's not that it's like a lesser value, but just realizing that they really have so much to offer from their culture.

Third, getting out of one's comfort zone was a repeated subtheme. Being in a totally different culture had its challenges, but participants recognized how the effort to be pushed in various ways to be uncomfortable was a growing experience.

### **Relationships**

Several participants remarked on their experience to appreciate the differences of other people in other cultures and how that developed their cross-cultural thinking (n = 19; 61%). Through recognizing and appreciating others' differences, participants noted how they were able to see how much others had to contribute.

A second subtheme was a reliance on the participant's personal faith (n = 17; 55%). Being in a foreign country with a language barrier and unfamiliarity of the culture, participants recalled how they often they looked to their personal faith commitment to aid them in coping.

Having personal conversations and building relationships developed as the third subtheme (n = 17; 55%). Participants reported that having a deep relationship with a Filipino allowed them to have a stronger context for the cross-cultural experience as well as the opportunity to explore their cultural inquisitiveness with a local resource.

The fourth subtheme of seeing similarities with the Filipino culture to that of the United States emerged, paralleling the first subtheme in appreciating the differences between the two countries (n = 13; 42%). One participant shared:

I think through my personality and through just growing from [the] trip, I can find a common ground in people with different cultures ... because going to the Philippines, there was a total different culture as well and we just found a

common ground, which was what we were—Taylor University. And so I feel like that has equipped me to go to other cultures ... and connect through [finding] common ground.

Participants recalled how the similarities between the Philippines and the United States surprised them and they developed an understanding of how two different countries can share so much, particularly historical impact on one another.

### **Future Travel**

Participants described how this international practicum trip gave them a hunger for experiencing other cultures. One participant stated, “I immediately fell in love with [Filipinos] and who they were, and so it was just giving me more of a want to know other cultures and other people and just like who they are.” Even more so, this experience gave participants a desire to continue to become more aware of what is happening, locally and around the world. One participant said, “It has made me much more interested in learning about different cultures and it makes me want to travel more and just get more experience with different countries and learning about each country.” Another participant expressed:

I think on a global scale it's made me more aware of the problems people face ... it's made me want to take action more and to see where I feel definitely called to work with children and in education ... I've realized the importance of engaging people around me ... I'd really like to engage the community here more because this is where I'm living while I'm at school.

Thus, the participants' international experience impacted how they think locally as well.

### **Discussion**

Both the quantitative and qualitative results from the Taylor University studies show the international teaching practicum experience to the Philippines to be successful in developing cross-cultural awareness and growth in its participants. All participants affirmed that they felt more competent in interacting with people of other backgrounds after this experience.

This study yielded some basic insights and implications that can be translated across similar international experiences in efforts to grow students' cross-cultural skills. First, in this particular study, the location of the Philippines highly influenced the results in terms of what the students saw and experienced, both in the broader cultural context and in the school systems where the participants taught. In light of the impact of poverty on the participants in this study, other teaching practicum experiences might reflect different results depending on the level of poverty in the respective country the students find themselves. The researchers would encourage others considering a similar program to contemplate the type of environment in which the teaching practicum is located. As this study demonstrates, an impoverished country has a particular impact on cross-cultural skill growth, whereas a different western country might impact development differently.

Similarly, participants in this study encountered a language barrier that impacted their experience in that they talked about how they struggled to fit into the culture and understand their surroundings. The greater struggle produced greater effort—again, something for future practicum supervisors to consider when planning a comparable experience.

This study's findings point to the importance of students building relationships with people of other cultures in building their cross-cultural awareness. Through building relationships, students learn how to become more comfortable in asking questions and appreciating differences. As one participant noted, “...learning to ask good questions and be respectful when they have differing views on things or when they viewed me coming in as a completely different person” influenced her cross-cultural appreciation and skills.

Finally, this international experience instilled in many participants a desire to travel in the future and learn about different cultures and other peoples. Thus, this study showed that exposure to a new culture promotes a spirit of learning about additional cultures, thereby increasing cross-cultural awareness and skills further.

This study offers university faculty one example of an international teaching practicum experience in which participants grew in their cross-cultural skills and awareness as a result of being immersed in the culture and school. The study also explored the specific factors that impacted the students' growth. From this study, it is evident that diverse cultural experiences help students to develop cross-cultural awareness and competence, as well as a hunger for learning about other peoples and places.

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# Promoting Cultural Awareness in Pre-Service Teachers: Findings During a Cultural Historical Immersion Experience

Ronald Ginn, PhD

## Abstract

The steady change in cultural composition of students in classrooms across the United States has impacted teaching and learning. As cultural diversity increases, so does the cultural mismatch between predominantly white, Eurocentric, middle class teachers and a growing number of nonwhite students. Research suggests that nonwhite students may not learn as effectively when the ethnic and cultural background of their teachers is different from their own. Furthermore, white teachers entering the workforce often lack the cultural awareness for ethnic, racial, and social groups that are different from their own. It is important for future teachers to develop cultural awareness to effectively teach students from all cultural backgrounds. This paper discusses a recent study that explored the lived experiences of pre-service teachers during a cultural historical immersion experience, and examined their perspectives of cultural awareness and the disorienting experiences that influenced their cultural awareness. The emerging themes provide evidence that may help colleges and universities of teacher preparation better prepare pre-service teachers to meet the needs of culturally and ethnically diverse students in the classroom.

## Introduction

Preparing predominantly white pre-service teachers to become culturally aware and culturally competent professionals may lead to improving learning and meeting the needs of culturally diverse learners (Malewski, Sharma, and Phillion 2012; Santoro and Major 2012). Many pre-service teachers do not have a deep understanding of cultural complexities, and this can impact their relationships with culturally diverse students (Delano-Oriaran 2012; Keengwe 2010). A key element in developing cultural awareness is a fundamental understanding of cultural, social, political, and historical perspectives of their future students (DiAngelo and Sensoy 2010; Goldenberg 2014). Pre-service teachers who are racially privileged and who grew up as members of the dominant culture may have little context for understanding issues of historical racism and white privilege (Howard 2010). Building cultural awareness is a critical step in recognizing the problematic role race and culture play in teacher-student relationships (Goldenberg 2014).

Cultural immersion experiences are designed to promote cultural awareness and serve as a catalyst for transforming perspectives while enhancing empathy and sensitivity toward culturally diverse students (Canfield, Low, and Hovestadt 2009; Streets 2011). Adding a cultural and historical element to immersion experiences may help pre-service teachers understand the past to shape the future (Lee and Foster 2011). Acquiring an understanding of oppressed and marginalized cultures along with the social, political, and historical perspectives of their future students promotes both pre-service teacher cultural awareness and potential success among their culturally diverse learners (DiAngelo and

Sensoy 2010; Stanton and Gonzalez 2011). This study addressed how a civil rights pilgrimage was used as a cultural historical immersion experience and as a catalyst that transformed the perspectives of pre-service teachers.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of pre-service teachers during cultural historical immersion experiences, and to examine their perceptions of cultural awareness and the disorienting experiences that influenced their cultural awareness. During a ten-day civil rights pilgrimage, pre-service teachers visited key civil rights sites in Atlanta, Birmingham, Tuscaloosa, Montgomery, Selma, New Orleans, Little Rock, and Memphis. The civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s was used to provoke disorienting experiences that influenced the cultural awareness and development of pre-service teachers.

### **Transformative Learning**

The lived experiences of pre-service teachers during cultural historical immersion experiences were best understood through the theory of transformative learning (Mezirow 1991, 2000). Transformative learning theory was used as a framework for determining if disorienting experiences prompted perspective transformation and influenced the cultural awareness of pre-service teachers. Transformative learning theory is most often posited in the context of adult learning (Cranton and Taylor 2012). The transformative process moves forward when a new perspective converges on previously held perceptions, and forces questions and critical reflection relating to earlier learning (Cranton and Taylor 2012).

Transformative learning begins to take place when triggering effects known as disorienting dilemmas have the potential for transforming perspectives (Mezirow 2000). These triggering effects are activated through events and people, and often challenge prior assumptions. Expectations from assimilated perspectives may promote understanding of a new perspective that may be embraced or repudiated (Cranton and Taylor 2012). Adult learners will either confirm what they know about an experience or be transformed by the interpretation of an experience (Mezirow 1991).

### **Research Questions**

Four research questions were formulated for this qualitative study. These questions focused on pre-service teacher perceptions of how disorienting experiences influenced and developed cultural awareness.

RQ1. What are the lived experiences of pre-service teachers on a cultural historical immersion experience?

RQ2. In what ways do pre-service teachers perceive their cultural historical immersion experiences as influencing their cultural awareness?

RQ3. What disorienting experiences, if any, do pre-service teachers perceive transformed their perspectives about their cultural awareness during cultural historical immersion experiences?

RQ4. In what ways, if any, do disorienting experiences transform perspectives of pre-service teachers toward their cultural awareness during cultural historical immersion experiences?

Through data collection and analysis, the findings specific to RQ2, RQ3, and RQ4 converged to answer RQ1.

### **Literature Review**

A broad and comprehensive literature review confirmed the problem that exists among white pre-service teachers working with ethnic and racial groups different from their own, and how cultural historical immersion experiences can help to transform their perspectives. One way shown to support the development of cultural awareness in pre-service teachers was through a better understanding of the culture, race, and history of their future students. The literature

review within this study examined the historic, systemic, and widespread problems that exist for culturally diverse students and their predominantly white teachers. An examination of the cultural deficiencies of white pre-service teachers was necessary to understand the depth of the cultural gap that exists in culturally diverse classrooms. White pre-service teachers are often limited in their exposure and personal experiences with people from cultures different from their own (Gay 2010, 2013). Members of the dominant culture often lack cultural awareness due to inadequate understandings of the concepts of white privilege, color blindness, microaggressions, ignorance and resistance, cultural conflict, meritocracy, and sociocultural knowledge (Milner 2010). Pre-service teachers' cultural awareness may increase if they have a better awareness of these concepts, and this awareness may better prepare them to successfully teach culturally diverse learners.

In the second part of the review in this study, transformative learning and the role of immersion experiences were examined as part of the development of cultural awareness among pre-service teachers. Transformative learning was associated with studies where pre-service teachers questioned prior assumptions that resulted in perspective transformation (Carrington et al. 2015; Herbers and Nelson 2009; Kambutu and Nganga 2008; Sharma et al. 2012; Trilokekar and Kukar 2011). Specifically, disorienting experiences that were associated with transformative learning during cultural immersion experiences were shown to lead to perspective transformation and influence cultural awareness (Addleman et al. 2014; Sharma et al. 2012). Critical reflection and discourse are components of transformative learning (Mezirow 1997, 2000) and these components have been shown to increase the understanding of cultural awareness (Addleman et al. 2014; Doucet et al. 2013).

## Method

This phenomenological study was used to explore the lived experiences of pre-service teachers during cultural historical immersion experiences, and to examine their perceptions of cultural awareness and the disorienting experiences that influenced their cultural awareness. Selection of participants for this study resembled the demographics of current practitioners in the field. Participants were female (66%) and male (33%) Caucasian pre-service teachers in their freshman through senior years enrolled in a teacher education program at a midsize Upper Midwest university. Participants were enrolled in a variety of licensure programs. Data was collected through pre- and post-trip interviews, focus groups, and daily reflective journals.

The cultural historical immersion experience was a ten-day civil rights pilgrimage that covered 11 states and 3,200 miles. This trip included over 100 people made up of students, student leaders, and faculty members from a variety of cultures and ethnicities. Peers on two buses were predominantly European American, African American, and Hmong American.

Cultural and historical elements of African American civil rights were examined at various museums and sites specific to the pre-civil-rights era, the civil rights movement during the 1950s and 1960s, and the current civil rights trends in the 21st century. This multistate immersion experience incorporated cultural, historical, political, and social contexts. The experience included visiting prominent cities during the civil rights movement including Atlanta, Montgomery, Selma, Tuscaloosa, Birmingham, New Orleans, Little Rock, and Memphis. The experiences included: engaging local citizens connected with prominent historical events; touring key historical landmarks including churches, institutions, and museums; viewing key historical and dramatic video presentations while riding on a bus; and participating in nightly group debriefing sessions.

## Findings

Pre-service teachers experienced cultural and historical elements that have often been suppressed by the dominant culture. This cultural historical immersion triggered disorienting experiences for pre-service teachers that transformed perspectives and influenced their cultural awareness. RQ1 for this study was as follows: What are the lived experiences

of pre-service teachers on a cultural historical immersion experience? The data collected and analyzed for RQ2, RQ3, and RQ4 converged to answer this first question. As such, the findings relative to participants’ lived experiences in RQ2, RQ3, and RQ4 are detailed below.

*RQ2. In what ways do pre-service teachers perceive their cultural historical immersion experiences as influencing their cultural awareness?*

Many participants reported that the open door to learning was vivid and impactful when being immersed in the history of the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s as they visited prominent cities in the South. They met people who were an integral part of that history. A summary of themes and subthemes found for RQ2 is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: RQ2 Themes**

Themes	Subthemes
The realization and influence of being there	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Realizing personal limited experience</li> <li>• Placing yourself in others’ footsteps</li> <li>• Deeper understanding of history and current issues</li> <li>• Deeper understanding of history and current issues</li> </ul>
The realization and influence of relationship building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desire to develop relationships</li> <li>• Fear and judgment to acceptance and trust</li> <li>• Breaking down cultural barriers</li> <li>• Learning about cultural differences</li> </ul>
The realization and influence of poverty and privilege	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experiencing wealth and poverty, privilege and restriction, freedom and bondage, segregation and desegregation</li> <li>• Comparing past history and present conditions</li> </ul>
The realization and influence of personal growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developed nonjudgmental and open-minded disposition</li> <li>• Advanced learning of history, events, and people</li> <li>• Self-checking cultural perspectives</li> <li>• Developing a better understanding of people</li> </ul>
The realization and influence of personal growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desire to be an informed educator</li> <li>• Desire to be a relational and accepting educator</li> <li>• Desire to be a culturally responsive educator</li> <li>• Desire to develop critical thinking and cultural awareness in future students</li> </ul>

Participants were treated to a discussion session with the youngest of the original Freedom Riders, Mr. Charles Person. One participant spoke about being able to saturate his “odd human desire to see and fully believe” while on this trip. He continued to express his delight in meeting Charles Person. He explained:

A living breathing being, who knew Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was in front of us ready to share his view of the world. This was yet another wonderful moment where history was literally alive! In fact, I was able to ask him questions and gain his very reliable perspective as to how to be an effective activist.

*RQ3. What disorienting experiences, if any, do pre-service teachers perceive transformed their perspectives about their cultural awareness during cultural historical immersion experiences?*

**Slavery Reenactment**

The slavery reenactment took place in Selma, Alabama. It was an event in which all students on the buses walked in the footsteps of slaves and slavery. For 90 to 120 minutes, the slave master was in full control. Each student was

forced to walk in line, one behind the other, in positions that were physically challenging. They were loaded onto a slave ship, forced into darkness in tight quarters, and were prepared for the slave market. One participant recalled this disorienting experience: “I was moved by two seemingly opposite forces of the human spirit. I cried at the remembrance that the human race can be so dreadfully evil and inhuman. While I was in the hall packed with 30 others in dark confusion, I was realizing the vast similarities of inhumanity between the slave trade and the genocide of the Holocaust.” Another participant echoed this personal experience:

I felt so dehumanized when she called us all n\*\*\*\*\*. At the beginning I was, at first, shaking because of the cold. But as she started yelling I was shaking less because of the temperature. I would hear her yelling at the others and I would want to turn around and look, but I knew that if I did one of my peers would be killed, and I did not want that on my conscience. Her words were hurtful and demeaning.

## Selma

The fourth day of the trip and a full 24 hours of the civil rights pilgrimage in Selma, Alabama, was dedicated to a variety of learning. During this period, trip members toured the city of Selma, visited the National Voting Rights Museum and Institute, participated in the slavery reenactment, had lunch at a local Baptist church, completed a community service project, and ended the evening having dinner at Freedom Café and participating in a local performance of young multiethnic children and young adults from Selma.

One participant reported she had heard stories of segregation in the city and how much hate existed. She noticed these children used the Freedom Foundation as a safe haven and a place to go and interact with people of different races. She heard from one of the adult leaders that bomb threats were recently leveled against the Freedom Foundation for trying to promote desegregation. She told about the tears of sadness and joy—sadness because of the current state of unrest in the city, and joy because of how the children in Selma were rising above their conditions through dance and theater.

## Chair simulation

In downtown Atlanta, Georgia, students visited The Center for Civil and Human Rights. The most talked about gallery in the center included a lunch counter simulator that many students on the trip engaged in. The simulation replicated the sit-ins at lunch counters in the 1960s by African American students who desired to be served food at white-only counters. This experience included sensory elements of touch and sound to disorient some participants, but it impacted all students who sat at the counter. One participant stated the following about the lunch counter simulator:

You are sitting in a seat as a colored person in a white restaurant. You put these earphones on and as soon as you put your hands down, you hear all these noises in the background. I thought that someone was actually talking to me, so I was about to take my earphones off and then I looked around me and nobody was there. It was just so powerful. You could hear all the jeering and taunting, and all the death threats just right around you. I understand culture, but I guess I really didn't understand that culture until then.

## Church impact

The civil rights pilgrimage included stops at Ebenezer Baptist Church and old Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, First African Baptist Church in Tuscaloosa, and Ebenezer Baptist Church in Selma. Participants spoke of these experiences as meaningful in the development of their cultural awareness. One person shared her experiences of worshipping at Ebenezer and visiting First African Baptist Church. She expressed how deeply overwhelming it was to attend the church service on Sunday morning. She was surprised at how welcoming this predominantly African

American church was. She spoke about the cultural experience of being in a church where skin color obviously did not matter. She had never experienced such immediate acceptance. She said, “I felt the community at pretty much every church. And everyone who wanted to tell their stories really helped change my perspective on a lot of things.”

Participants identified some experiences to a lesser degree that could be disorienting but were considered in the broader discussion of other experiences. These included Little Rock Central High School, developing relationships on the bus, and meeting homeless people.

*RQ4. In what ways, if any, do disorienting experiences transform perspectives of pre-service teachers toward their cultural awareness during cultural historical immersion experiences?*

A summary of themes and subthemes found for RQ4 are presented in Table 2. These themes and subthemes provide insight into the impact of the experience on students’ cultural awareness, historical awareness, self-awareness, and professional awareness—all of which are dimensions that can impact their teaching approaches and skills.

**Table 2: RQ4 Themes**

Themes	Subthemes
Increased cultural awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to and understanding of current social injustice</li> <li>• Understanding the lives of those currently impacted</li> <li>• Understanding concepts of poverty and privilege</li> </ul>
Increased historical awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to the past and understanding hardships faced</li> <li>• Understanding the lives of those who lived history</li> <li>• Understanding the violent nature of one race to another</li> </ul>
Increased personal self-awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding and facing personal privilege</li> <li>• Understanding personal tendencies toward being judgmental</li> <li>• Understanding isolation, unequal treatment, being the minority</li> <li>• Understanding lack of personal experiences</li> <li>• Freedom to deliberately seek and understand more</li> </ul>
Increased professional awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responsibility to teach representative history and social constructs</li> <li>• Understanding of different learning styles/differentiated instruction</li> <li>• Deeper desire to increase the cultural awareness of future students</li> </ul>
Influence of cultural historical immersion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experiencing culture and history firsthand through being there</li> <li>• Experiencing history through those who lived it</li> <li>• Experiencing life from a nondominant perspective</li> <li>• Feeling the emotion of what others in history felt</li> </ul>

**Recommendations**

A number of recommendations can be issued when considering the results of the present study. First, teacher preparation faculty should consider engaging pre-service teachers in cultural historical immersion experiences to advance their cultural awareness of cultures different from their own. This is critical because (a) culture and history of American ethnic minorities have a direct connection and relevancy for improving the learning of culturally diverse students (Stanton and Gonzalez 2011); (b) culturally diverse students bring history and life stories to the classroom that may not be understood by their pre-service teachers (Evans and Gunn 2011); (c) an understanding of cultural and historical perspectives of nonwhite students helps pre-service teachers expand their perspectives about past and

present cultural moments in the lives of their students (DiAngelo and Sensoy 2010); and (d) culturally diverse students are often challenged and do not learn as effectively when the ethnicity and sociocultural backgrounds of their teachers differ from their own (Gay 2013).

Second, cultural historical immersion experiences in undergraduate programs should be considered for all disciplines. This may have the same impact on other undergraduates as it did on pre-service teachers in this study. As previously stated, the literature on developing cultural awareness in undergraduates is not only a cross-race interest, but a cross-discipline interest as well. A general interest and concern across U.S. campuses and university faculty and staff is to seek opportunities to improve racial relationships and bring racial reconciliation to students who can be change agents for future generations.

Third, engaging all pre-service teachers in cultural historical immersion experiences that span a variety of races, ethnicities, and cultures should be considered. For instance, an immersion experience focusing on the culture and history of Native Americans could serve a similar purpose. A deeper understanding of cultures and histories different from one's own is critical for building personal cultural awareness as well as understanding the diverse cultural communities within classrooms.

Finally, the results of this study suggest that it may be valuable to engage current teaching professionals in cultural historical immersion experiences. This should include both PK–12 teachers and professors in university settings, both inside and outside teacher education. Engaging current professionals in a professional development immersion experience with cultural and historical components could positively impact the learning of their nonwhite students.

### Concluding Comments

This study showed the lived experiences of white pre-service teachers during a cultural historical immersion experience. These experiences included reenactments of the slave trade, a close-up look at southern plantation life for enslaved people, and learning about the underground railway in a slave haven home. The distant past met the recent past with respect to the marginalization, oppression, and social injustices against African Americans. The past met the present as participants in this study were confronted with current issues of poverty and discrimination still facing African American citizens. The present met the future as participants were challenged through their perspective transformation to increase the cultural awareness of their future students and bring representative history and social constructs into future classrooms.

This study documented and presented the benefits of this type of experience for pre-service teachers. The findings aligned with the literature, which presented the significant nature of cultural immersion experiences building cultural awareness in undergraduate students, graduate students, and pre-service teachers. The additional component of historical learning of cultures different from one's own is a powerful means of advancing cultural awareness and providing a deeper understanding of culture and history for pre-service teachers.

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# Equipping the Pre-Service Elementary Christian Teacher to Meet Struggling Learners' Needs

Jillian N. Lederhouse, PhD  
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At the start of the 21st century, teacher licensure in most states shifted from course-based requirements to more demanding standards-based requirements in order to prepare teachers for the increasingly diverse public school student population. To improve college and career readiness among these students, this change in teacher preparation was soon followed by all states adopting either the K–12 Common Core State Standards (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and Council of Chief State School Officers 2010) or their own more rigorous elementary and secondary college and career readiness standards. Teacher candidates seeking public school licensure in all states not only had to meet more extensive professional standards, but also needed to prepare their literacy and math instruction to reflect these recently implemented K–12 standards, which call for a higher level of analytical skills.

Like all other colleges and universities with teacher certification programs, Christian higher education institutions seeking state licensure for their graduates are similarly required to ensure their completers can effectively teach every type of learner—at the same time the bar for what these students need to know and do has been raised significantly. Because Christian teacher education programs stress that each learner is created in God's image, their elementary education majors have generally developed a strong sense of responsibility to meet every student's academic need. However, this intense aspiration for reaching all learners can become overwhelming during student teaching.

Elementary pre-service teachers typically face two challenges throughout their brief clinical experience. First, despite several prior field experiences in varied contexts, elementary student teachers barely manage their numerous classroom roles effectively, let alone develop confidence in instructing struggling learners. Learning to differentiate a rigorous curriculum, along with developing effective classroom management skills, keeping records, relating to parents, and negotiating shared roles with their mentors and specialists is an exhausting process for most fully invested novices. The need to challenge advanced readers or mathematicians while addressing the needs of typical students often leaves pre-service teachers dissatisfied with their ability to meet the needs of those children who fail to master concepts.

Secondly, the print and internet resources to which student teachers turn offer countless strategies, but they are often unconnected to the root cause of students' struggles, especially in the area of mathematics instruction. Even knowing that a child has an IEP or 504 plan, has recently transferred to the school, is still learning English, or dislikes the subject does not necessarily explain the reason why a student is failing to grasp a particular idea. Choosing a strategy without identifying this reason is much like a physician randomly prescribing medication without taking the time to diagnose the condition properly. We would expect a doctor to determine the specific cause before treating the illness, but novices often have few resources and little experience or time to make this determination. As a result,

they often choose strategies that have minimal effect and come away from their student teaching experience feeling unprepared for the broad span of achievement levels they will face in their initial teaching position. Although our first-year graduate survey demonstrates that our students leave Wheaton generally well prepared, their lowest levels of confidence occur in the area of teaching students who have linguistic and other special needs (Employment Statistics of 2016 Program Completers). They struggle in meeting the academic needs of students who struggle.

Even with a well-structured senior seminar that runs concurrently with student teaching, there is insufficient time to focus substantively on the needs of struggling learners during clinical practice. Completing the edTPA (Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning and Equity 2014) which is required for state licensure, preparing for curriculum night and parent conferences, and developing a professional portfolio all compete for space on the course agenda. When there is adequate time for discussion, it tends to focus on immediate issues such as classroom management. But the challenges of helping struggling learners can still be addressed before graduation.

### **Opportunities for Further Development after Student Teaching**

Since the Wheaton College teacher education program requires all elementary education majors to complete their student teaching in the fall semester, we offer two opportunities during the spring semester to revisit their concern for nonfluent readers and mathematics students. Our options are limited inasmuch as our majors complete up to 84 semester hours of general education, a 40-hour major, and most seek to add one or two 18–24 semester hour endorsements in ESL, bilingual, special education, or middle school math, language arts, science, or social studies for their Illinois Professional Educator License. Frequently taking the maximum 18 hours in their final semester, our students have little space for enrolling in four-hour elective courses that would provide them with the opportunity to revisit the causes of reading or math struggles. In light of these realities, we have developed two options to address the needs of students with regard to teaching struggling learners: a two-semester-hour literacy course and a semester-long mentoring group project in mathematics.

The two-semester-hour course in literacy focuses on diagnosing reading problems and prescribing an effective course of intervention in addition to identifying highly fluent readers and writers to design similarly appropriate programs of study for them. Although this course is not required for licensure, it was added to the program as a recommended course several years ago when a few Illinois districts began hiring only those candidates who had two distinct courses in reading methods. In this course, literacy students conduct and interpret data from varied individual assessments, inventories, and observations. They do this with the goal of specifying areas for targeted instruction and then monitoring progress to test a strategy's effectiveness beyond basic reading level placement. Enrollment for this course is generally seven to twelve students.

In mathematics, we offer a different option: a semester-long mentoring group project that focuses on elementary students who struggle in mathematics. This research team is part of the Wheaton College Faculty-Student Mentoring Initiative. The initiative, begun in 2007, has enabled departments to provide one course release per year for each full-time, tenure-track department member to mentor students through conducting research. The goals for these small group collaborations (of five to seven students) include deeper academic, social, spiritual, and—in our department—professional understandings. In our education department, professors have previously explored topics such as the male elementary teacher, understanding the novice teacher's first-year experience, writing HIV/AIDS prevention curriculum for South African schools, and student-teacher/mentor relationships in international school settings. Through these projects our majors have developed research skills in interviewing, surveying, writing literature reviews, and problem-based learning. Although they receive no college credit for their participation on the research team, some education students have coauthored articles; others have presented at national and state conferences. However, one of the strongest outcomes for education students has been learning how to avoid the “teachers' lounge mentality” of merely venting professional frustrations; instead they are empowered to employ the findings of educational research to alleviate them.

The only qualifications for enrolling in either the literacy course or the mathematics mentoring group is to have successfully completed student teaching and to be available for when the course or group meets weekly. This past semester the course met in a regular campus classroom, but the research group met in a more informal context, either in the campus student center restaurant or the professor's home. The first objective of both the course and research project is to have the students select a struggling K–6 reader or math student from their prior student teaching experience and present a description of the student using a case study methodology. We then read and discuss from a wide body of literature on possible causes and recommended approaches for each type of struggle.

Over the course of the semester, our students are then expected to collect data on their students. The literacy students, who spend time learning how to administer individual assessments and inventories, return to their student teaching schools to work with their identified student during the semester. The math research team members collect their data electronically from their former cooperating teachers. Finally, both the literacy and math groups identify a probable cause, suggest evidence-based strategies, and reflect on how their approach would change if they could return to work with these students. The literacy course requires additional work in other areas of language arts as well.

Both the course and research teams operate as a seminar with the professor often taking on the role of a colearner. In the math research project, discussion is always framed around the individual teacher's struggling student. Because of the ethos established by the professor, the context, and the small number of enrollees, students are quite candid about their prior relationship with their students and their perceived failures to address their struggles adequately. They also frame the discussion around the classroom resources they utilized in terms of provided materials, technology, and services. The culminating project of the math research team is a final reflection on how insights gained from the readings and discussion have increased their ability to help struggling math learners.

### **Evidence of Post-Student-Teaching Growth**

In the literacy course, students' insights gained and questions raised from their student teaching experience have provided a willingness to dig deeper into the literature on such topics as close reading and its competing philosophies regarding the amount of vocabulary and concept frontloading, varied practices surrounding interpretations of guided reading, looking beyond gathering data to discern how the data inform next steps for instruction, and varied approaches to collaboration for addressing specific needs. The culminating projects of the literacy assessment course are a formal case study of the struggling student and a final reflective paper articulating their framework of literacy instruction. The purpose of these two assignments is to enable enrollees to balance the needs of the individual learner with the curricular outcomes of an entire instructional program. Below are some excerpts from their final reflections which demonstrate students' experiences.

A kindergarten student teacher wrote:

A multisensory approach to teaching beginning reading is highly effective. Moreover, beyond a program there is still room and need for the creative teacher who instills a sense of wonder in learning to read and taking ideas to print. For example, I observed a teacher helping her children use their "superhero powers" to unlock the meaning of new words and gain meaning from print which enabled her children to see themselves as capable, beginning readers.

A first-grade student teacher reported:

Balancing wait time to give students the opportunity to figure it out—setting that positive tone so students have the uninterrupted space to pause and think while keeping those students, who are all too willing to help out, to hold their thoughts—is an art form. While I wondered about this in the fall, revisiting this class in the spring and seeing these children hang in there is refreshing; they have really embraced an "I can do it" attitude. There is a delicate balance of providing appropriate and timely support and knowing when to withhold it.

Expressing her frustration with guided reading practices, a fourth-grade student teacher wrote:

I need to keep the learners in mind. If there is no variation in instruction, why am I spending time in two groups with no attention to individual needs within the group? I need to rethink grouping practices by level, by strategy instruction, and skill. I need to ask, "Why am I grouping, and what does that accomplish in helping students grow as readers?"

The culminating project in the math research team is a formal reflection on the post-student-teachers' identified learners, the changes in the student teachers' own knowledge base, and how they would apply these changes in their role as math teachers if they could turn back the clock to work again with their particular struggling students. Here are examples from three participants' reflections.

A kindergarten student teacher wrote:

How would my practice change? I would eliminate timed tests. Fast thinking is not nearly as valuable as deep thinking. Procedural fluency is important, but it can be developed through games and activities that emphasize number sense and flexible thinking.

Students deserve to know what they know/can do, where they are going next, and how they are going to get there. Assessment and feedback should help the student to learn and improve, not just provide a letter/number grade (evaluation). Students should be reflecting on their own learning; I love the idea of giving homework questions that require students to demonstrate understanding and reflect on questions and mistakes.

Boaler (2016), in *Mathematical Mindsets*, emphasizes the collaborative nature of math that requires the ability to ask good questions, justify one's reasoning, and consider multiple perspectives. The typical format of a math class and its assessments do not lead to this kind of thinking. Assuming that we will not all have the freedom to completely transform the math curriculum at our schools, I think we can start by creating a different atmosphere (trying to relieve math anxiety and develop growth mindsets) and by introducing number talks or more open-ended collaborative tasks.

A fifth-grade student teacher explained:

One of my biggest concerns during student teaching was that Rosa did not know her math facts (simple addition, subtraction, and multiplication). I thought this was what was holding her back from learning new skills—because all her brainwork was going towards simple math.

After our research this semester, I figured that I should change my approach to ensure number sense over math facts. Rosa has a hard time implementing the strategies/procedures taught in class because she is not actively connecting those to number sense; rather she is just mechanically following the steps laid out for her.

A third-grade student teacher wrote:

As an elementary teacher who will be endorsed in special education, I have observed a lot of practice where students (and teachers) just follow a programmed math text, even though they (the students) could probably do a lot more rigorous work. It seems as though right answers are all that matter. When I had to instruct this way, I was bored. And I noticed that my students were equally bored. It was almost as if we are afraid that work which requires students to think would be too problematic to even try.

This is an issue of equity. Students deserve to develop number sense whether or not they are on a 504 or IEP. They deserve to see math as more than fill-in-the-blank exercises. They deserve to see math as something useful in their daily lives. And they deserve to see themselves as capable of understanding it.

## Professors' Observations from the Two Options

What did we gain as professors from giving our students a chance to revisit their practice and refocus their efforts on students who struggled? We learned that experience, albeit very limited, is vital to understanding the complexity of good teaching. Although the student teaching semester was very brief, it gave students sufficient opportunity to engage in professional decision making. That context enabled them to assess their own abilities, and it showed them what more they needed to know in order to serve all students well.

As professors, we also affirmed that deep reflection is essential to growth. Readings were not lengthy so that they could be read several times before each session. Written responses on each math article or chapter were emailed to the professor before the session. Because of the small number of students in the class and group, we all came to know these struggling K–6 students well, identifying with their instructional challenges as we collaboratively problem-solved.

As professors in the role of colearners, we saw undergraduates benefit from a “graduate seminar” discussion format. Students had to be well-prepared to evaluate the applicability of promoted strategies and programs. Their task was to envision how each component would “play out” in their specific context as well as across the elementary grade range. Students then evaluated whether the reading was helpful enough to be used by the next research team or literacy course enrollees.

We also affirmed that current, quality readings help students, as Maxine Greene (1988) stated, “surpass the given and look at things as if they could be otherwise” in order to envision a different learning model. Their reflections were thoughtful. They provided a balanced description of their student teaching context, addressing its strengths as well as its limitations. Understanding their context also provided a framework for judging the utility of certain programs or strategies. Rather than merely wish that their student teaching placement had implemented a certain approach over the ones they were required to use, their critique showed how they valued the program and structure they followed yet demonstrated the need for change and how to address it through what they had learned.

In literacy, students first acquired the skills for administering and analyzing individual reading *Intervention for Classroom Teachers* (DeVries 2014), along with additional resources to deeply explore such areas as guided reading (Burkins and Croft 2010) and close reading (Boyles 2014; Frey, Nancy, and Fisher 2013; Fisher, Frey, and Hattie 2016). Although there was a strong reading and discussion focus on mathematics (see Dacey and Salemi 2017; Dacey and Lynch 2007; Parrish 2014; Shumway 2011; Sullivan and Lilburn 2002), several of the math research team's readings are transferable to other disciplines. To understand the role of persistence when solving complex problems, we read several chapters from Duckworth's *Grit* (2016). Before reading sections of Boaler's *Mathematical Mindsets* (2016), we read several chapters written by her colleague, Carol Dweck (2016), in her seminal work *Mindset*. To understand the importance of learners receiving, applying, and seeking feedback, we read a section from Hattie's *Visible Learning for Teachers* (2012), which describes this most significant academic intervention. Seeing how these important learning elements are equally valid in other subjects helps elementary educators develop a holistic, well-integrated, and rigorous but accessible curriculum.

## Conclusions

Student evaluations from both the course and the mentoring group indicated that enrollees found these options in literacy and mathematics quite valuable. Although our alumni survey does not allow us to single out subgroups of elementary students due to the need to keep all feedback anonymous, we do follow up with elementary education alumni who have taken advantage of these literacy and math options. During their induction year, we contact them to determine the effectiveness of the course or research team and to adjust our own practice to improve these options' learning outcomes. Additionally, we continue to seek ways to provide further opportunities to help struggling readers

and math students for those elementary education majors who do not have space within their spring semester to participate in these current options.

Other institutions' elementary education programs may have all these supports in place for elementary math and reading pre-service teachers. But if programs require fall elementary student teaching and don't have room for two full, four-semester-hour spring courses, these two approaches may be of value. We would highly recommend them for enabling pre-service teachers to gain more confidence in meeting the needs of struggling learners. Linda Darling-Hammond (2005) reminds those involved in teacher preparation that what teachers know and do is the most important influence of students' learning. Developing both caring and competent teachers is foundational in the process of preparing Christian teachers. As future educators, our graduates have tremendous heart for helping the struggling learner; these options move them toward having the mindset and expertise as well.

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# Using edTPA Data to Improve Field Experiences in Preparation for Clinical Placements

Aaron Imig, EdD

Teacher preparation programs in institutions of higher education are continually reacting to requirements and benchmarks set forth by the states who provide graduates with licenses to teach. This work of redesigning, reshaping, and reworking the tools used to gather data on candidates as well as reformatting this collected data can be exhausting. The challenges of implementing edTPA as a consequential licensure component over a three-year period, in addition to beginning the CAEP accreditation process mandated by the state, has dominated the time and energy of faculty members in the education department at Corban University over the past two years. What follows is the story of how the education department was able to use a state mandated assessment of graduates (edTPA) and the data collected from this assessment to initiate a change that needed to occur but which other departments on campus were hesitant to make.

## Setting

Corban University is a liberal arts, Christian university, located on the outskirts of Salem, Oregon. The education department is the second largest program on campus and includes a traditional four-year undergraduate (TUG) program for both elementary and secondary candidates, a four-to-five-semester Graduate Teacher License (GTL) program for candidates who have a bachelor's degree in a field other than education, and a master of science in education.

The TUG program is a traditional four-year program, which includes 129 semester credits in a liberal arts setting. TUG students take education and content courses mixed in with the other general education requirements every semester of their time on campus. During the program, they complete three field-experience practica in preparation for their clinical placement during their last year.

The GTL program lasts four to five semesters depending upon which semester a student starts (clinical placements are not available in the summer semester). Candidates complete 30 semester credits during the program. There is a small requirement for some hours of observation prior to acceptance into the program. Unlike the TUG program of three field experiences, the GTL students have only one field experience prior to their clinical placement. The program, designed for working adults, includes three semesters of evening or online courses in preparation for the semester of clinical placement. Candidates must keep full school-day hours during their clinical placement, which means they cannot work full-time during the last semester.

## Research Supporting the Desired Change

The education department has long known that the GTL candidates needed to have more practicum experience prior to the clinical placement experience of student teaching. It is commonly recognized that teacher preparation programs need to incorporate field experience, and often more than a single field experience placement (Tang 2003; Zeichner 2002). Ben-Peretz (1995) found that field experience is viewed as the most critical factor in the development of teaching skills. Over a decade ago, Hudson and McRobbie (2004) pushed for more research linking the importance of field experience in a teacher candidate's ability to link theory and practice. The practicum or field experience allows candidates to combine theory and practice as well as to begin establishing personal teaching competence (Munby et al. 2001; Smith and Lev-Ari 2005). McDonnough and Matkins (2010) provide support for this link in their study, which found increased field experience led to an increased ability of elementary pre-service teachers to connect theory and practice in teaching science.

There are many factors that add to the quality of a field experience such as the mentor teacher (Hudson and McRobbie 2004); university supervisors (Asplin and Marks 2013); reflection and deliberation opportunities (Eisner 2002); cluster, clinical, and traditional placements (Darling-Hammond 2014; Hauge and Wittek 2003; Robinson 2014); and school context (Goldhaber, Krieg, and Theobald 2013; Schuster 2014). Beyond these qualities, sheer quantity of experience in classrooms has been shown to be a significant factor (Hallberg and Green 2015).

Graduates of programs who do not have multiple field experiences and teaching opportunities are often unprepared, and this can be seen in pre-service teachers even prior to student-teaching. According to Graham (1996), secondary candidates with no field experience prior to student teaching struggle in comparison to secondary candidates from institutions that require hours, sometimes in excess of 50, prior to student teaching. Candidates often believe that having been a student recently, they will be prepared for their student-teaching placement (Barnes 2016). Relying on their experiences as a student often creates overconfidence and, ultimately, a struggle with the complexity of being a teacher in the classroom (Feiman-Nemser 2001). Students of teaching learn better how to teach by engaging in teaching, and by being guided through their experiences through reflection and deliberation of this reflection (Eisner 2002).

Candidates themselves also are recognizing the need to have more time in the classroom during their teacher preparation program. Murray-Harvey et al. (2000) found that the practicum teaching experience was the most stressful aspect of teacher preparation; however, a majority of students indicated they wished it was a longer experience. In a study of 428 student teachers, Smith and Lev-Ari (2005) found that pre-service teachers desire more of the practical aspects of teacher preparation, with 91% of the candidates surveyed noting they valued the practicum experience more than any other part of the program. While this should not come as a surprise, as candidates desire to get out of college classrooms into the "real-world" of their career path, the fact that they noted the desire for more in combination with recognizing it was the most difficult part of the program provides insight to the value of the field experience in preparing teachers.

Since 2010, additional studies have continued to support the notion that more time in the field is essential to developing both theory and practice. Many additional studies have found similar results in identifying field experience opportunity and quality as needing major improvements along with, as Cooper and Nesmith (2013) state, "more authentic experiences that will allow future teachers to deal with the many complexities and challenges of today's classroom" (166). DeMonte (2016) compiled several studies that show a correlation between length of placement and new teacher effectiveness. Longer placements increased teacher effectiveness, and when combined with candidate self-perception of readiness to enter the profession, resulted in candidates who were more likely to stay in the profession (Ronfeldt, Schwartz, and Jacob 2014). The synthesized summary of these studies should not surprise educators: more experience that is realistic teaching in a supportive system will produce better-prepared teacher candidates for schools,

which are increasingly clamoring for new teachers who will come into ever-increasing complex environments and be successful teachers from the start.

While the idea for the adoption of an additional practicum experience for GTL students appeared to be an easy solution for education faculty, other university members had to be in agreement. Part of the difficulty in the adoption of this change for more practicum experiences for GTL students was in working with the admissions office. The GTL program was designed for working adults who were looking for a career change or career addition. Any change to the GTL structure that might make it difficult for prospective students to maintain their current employment in the first three semesters of the program was often met with resistance from admissions. The belief held by admissions was that increasing the amount of time required to not work in this “part-time” program would greatly affect the ability to attract and recruit quality candidates. Historically, the distinction of the “part-time” program was viewed as an effective draw compared with competing universities in the region. This hesitation to make a change to the program that would possibly decrease enrollment is understandable; however, the education department continued to push for this change on the basis of research and best practices.

Upon the completion of the 2017 spring semester, enough edTPA data had been collected to analyze and to begin making a compelling case for an increased practicum requirement for GTL candidates. There are too many variables to identify statistical significance with the data collection, but the initial look at the data brought forth a tangible expression of what the education department had been saying for years, and the admissions office understands the language of data. When presented with the data compiled from edTPA scores, they were able to support the desire to increase the practicum requirement in semester three, prior to the clinical placement semester.

**Analyzing edTPA Score Trends**

As previously stated, it is impossible, due to the wide number of variables (duration of program, age, marital status, children, current job, etc.) between the two programs to develop any type of statistical significance to the edTPA scores collected. However, during the initial glance at comparison data between the two groups, it was obvious that there was a wide gap in the scores from specific areas. Based upon the gaps we discovered, it was determined that we could address some key components of the candidates’ experience prior to their clinical placement (see Table 1).

**Table 1: Comparative data of three edTPA groups**

	<b>N =</b>	<b>Total Score</b>	<b>Score Task 1</b>	<b>Score Task 2</b>	<b>Score Task 3</b>	<b>Score Rubric 2</b>	<b>Score Rubric 11</b>	<b>Score Rubric 12</b>	<b>Score Rubric 15</b>
TUG 1	26	41.62	14.83	13.58	13.38	3.12	2.88	2.80	2.65
TUG 2	31	46.40	16.00	14.92	15.48	3.43	3.23	3.30	3.25
GTL 1	16	42.44	14.5	13.88	13.75	2.88	2.81	2.81	2.75

There were two insightful big-picture trends that became apparent upon first look at the data. The first encouraging trend was that there was a leap from TUG year one (41.62) to TUG year two (46.40) in the average total score. It is posited that this difference of almost five points was due to several factors: first, another year of exposure to edTPA language and expectations for the year-two candidates; second, improved focused instruction by professors based upon weak aspects of year-one edTPAs; third, year-two candidates were able to rely on their friends, the year-one students, and get valuable information for ways to improve their scores; and finally, the year-one candidates were given vouchers for their edTPA by the state, while the year-two candidates paid for it out of their own pocket. For both groups, the scores were not yet consequential in the state, but having a financial investment into the assessment could have provided an additional motivational factor.

The second, more discouraging, but most telling trend to the department, was the discrepancy between GTL year one (42.44) and TUG year two (46.40) total average scores. The GTL students consistently scored four points lower than the TUG students, despite being in the same preparation classes and senior seminar during completion. While the GTL program was a year behind the TUG program in submitting edTPA, all of the reasons mentioned in the previous paragraph for improved scores applied to this group of GTL students except for the third. The GTL students had the benefit of hearing edTPA language throughout their entire program, they received the same instruction as the TUG year-two students in their courses, and they paid for the edTPA out of their own pocket.

Using the 15 rubrics that comprise the edTPA score, the next task was to deconstruct each rubric to identify any information that would explain the near four-point (3.96) difference between the two groups. In looking at the scores spread across the series of rubrics, the department looked specifically for differences that were greater than .4 between TUG two and GTL one. The four rubrics that made this threshold were rubrics 2 (.55), 11 (.42), 12 (.49) and 15 (.5) (see Table 1 for the specific differences). These four rubrics accounted for 1.96 of the 3.96 difference on the total score between the two groups. The other 11 rubrics accounted for the rest of the two-point difference, which averages less than a .2 difference on each rubric. The rubrics evaluate candidates on the following areas:

- Rubric 2—developing supports for learning based upon students' individual, group, and whole class needs
- Rubric 11—whole class data analysis and trends of learning on an assessment task
- Rubric 12—quality of feedback on the assessment task
- Rubric 15—using feedback and data analysis to inform future learning and planning decisions

This notable gap on the four rubrics gave the department a clear sense of some aspects that needed to be addressed for the GTL candidates.

The next step was to look at the four rubrics for similarities of topic or themes that might suggest some type of relation. There were some crossover ideas, but the common thread seen in the four rubrics having the largest discrepancies was that all four rubrics measured an aspect of teaching which could not be completely replicated in fictional settings. Experience in a real classroom was necessary to practice the skills and traits measured in the four rubrics, more so than the other eleven rubrics. Creating supports for students in light of differentiated needs, providing feedback while analyzing data, and planning for future instruction are skills the edTPA demands of candidates, which require practice in authentic classroom settings. As recent literature has shown, the blending of theory and practice is a significant rationale for more time in a practicum experience. The results of the GTL candidates on these four rubrics provided the necessary data to begin to build a change in their program creating additional spaces for experience in a classroom prior to student teaching.

### **Steps to Implement Change and Moving Forward**

Upon collecting the data and spending time identifying the areas for improvements, the department determined a change had to be made to the GTL program that would provide more opportunities for candidates to be in classrooms prior to student teaching. As mentioned previously, the admissions department needed to be involved in this proposed change.

The first step to implement the change was showing the data to the admissions and provost offices to prove that candidates needed to spend more time in a classroom prior to clinical placement to increase effectiveness. The admissions team, upon seeing the overall edTPA score differences and task differences, quickly bought into the proposed change and agreed to begin work modifying their marketing strategy and language in publications to have candidates create flexibility in their work schedules in semester three, allowing for a more intense field experience.

The second step was to create a new and improved practicum framework for ED565 (1). This new practicum requirement was based on the TUG Field Experience III; however, there had to be more flexibility for candidates regarding the placement, while still providing ample opportunity to practice edTPA components. This practicum was designed to coincide with a concurrent course, ED531 Instructional Alignment II, that GTL students were taking in order to provide opportunity in a class to dialogue and discuss their practicum experience.

The third step has been the most difficult so far, mostly because the flexibility of the new practicum creates fluidity for placement coordinators. Working with the placement coordinator on campus, there had to be an understanding of what was being required for the GTL candidates in the practicum and establishing parameters of the specific requirements needed to be fulfilled in the practicum. At that point, the university placement coordinator was able to communicate with placement coordinators at the four local school districts most often placing GTL candidates, to explain desired goals and possible obstacles and to work through potential issues for each district. This work has been ongoing, and will continue to be shaped in the coming school year.

The final step will be to collect data again next spring and compare results based on this past spring's practicum. A trial run of the new ED565 practicum occurred in the spring semester of 2017 with 11 of 13 candidates in the ED531 course. Each of these candidates will complete an edTPA in the fall of 2017 resulting in more data to examine in December, and again in May when the TUG students have completed their edTPAs as well.

There is an amount of healthy anxiousness in the department in waiting to measure the impact of the practicum trial. There will be expected tweaks and improvements to the practicum design and kinks to be worked out in the placement of the candidates. The desire is to see a significant dent in the gap between the TUG and GTL scores on the overall edTPA score, especially the four rubrics that were targeted. The department as a whole has learned a valuable lesson in that there is important program learning that can result out of state-prescribed measures. Using a state-prescribed component, like the edTPA or CAEP, the School of Education was able to make the results work to support a change that went beyond the department. Much of the scrutiny and rigor for teacher preparation programs can be exhausting, but these measures and tools provide valuable insight. The hope is that through using the edTPA data a change has been enacted to provide a better experience for candidates and, in turn, further equip new teachers to be successful in their student teaching and beyond.

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# **Teaching Works and the Michigan Program Network Initiative: One University's Experience**

Dale B. Linton, PhD

## **Concerns for Teacher Education**

The landscape of P–12 education has rapidly changed in recent years. Today's beginning teacher faces a number of challenges that are quite different from those which previous generations of new teachers faced. To begin with, the shifting population demographics within the country has resulted in, and will continue to result in, student representation within classrooms that are more racially, ethnically, culturally, and socioeconomically diverse than in the past. At the same time, the teaching force of today looks much the same as the teaching force of the past: majority female; Caucasian; and middle class. According to Maxwell (2014), levels of disconnect can and are occurring between traditional majority-type teachers and their growing numbers of diverse students, and these disconnects disadvantage the educational advance of such students.

Next, by their own account, beginning teachers report being underprepared for all the duties, expectations, and performance responsibilities required of the profession (Ball and Foranzi 2012; Lambeth 2012; Stobaugh and Houchens 2014). This, along with additional negative factors associated with the profession, has accelerated an alarming attrition rate among beginning teachers who not only leave the school or classroom in which they are hired to teach, but also leave the profession altogether at alarming rates (Feldman 2012; Gujarati 2012; Ingersoll 2012; Teague and Swan 2013). This attrition leaves school districts with staggering financial costs to replace lost teachers (Moir 2009; Teague and Swan 2013) and has significant educational effects on primarily low-income students who are most often subject to repeatedly having multiple beginning teachers (NCTAF 2012).

In part, the alarming rate of new teacher attrition, coupled with the need to replace a large segment of retiring teachers, is also fueling a national teacher shortage that has not been seen since the 1990s (Camera 2016). Some estimate that 1.5 million new teachers will be needed in the coming years (Ball and Forzani 2011). In one sense this outlook is quite troubling to those of us in teacher education. Yet, at the same time, it also provides us with an opportunity to do something differently in addressing the problems at hand, one of which is to exchange a primarily theoretical approach to teacher education with a practiced-based training approach that includes “powerful materials and other resources” and develops “more consistent teacher training that will lead to greater equity in the supply of effective teaching” (Ball 2011).

## A New Way Forward

In the winter of 2016, the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) invited all Michigan educator preparation providers (EPPs) to attend a forum for the purpose of becoming informed of the various teacher evaluation systems that were approved for adoption by public school districts throughout the state. It was the goal of the MDE that EPPs would adopt and implement within their programs candidate assessment that would be aligned to some level of the approved teacher evaluation programs. Present at the forum were individuals representing each of the MDE approved teacher evaluation programs: Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching; the Marzano Teacher Evaluation Model; the Thoughtful Classroom; and the 5 Dimensions of Teaching and Learning. One additional individual, Deborah Lowenberg Ball, then Dean of the School of Education at the University of Michigan–Ann Arbor (U of M), was included in the forum to present her university's vision and work toward preparing effective practice-based classroom teachers, who would then be prepared to perform successfully to any of the approved Michigan teacher evaluation programs. Ball spoke of the work U of M had been doing within a group called *TeachingWorks*. She then invited EPPs to consider making application to a first-of-its-kind, multi-EPP, in-state network to work together toward the development and expansion of a common teacher preparation curriculum centered around a set of proven, research-based teacher practices that promote successful learning for all students, referred to as High Leverage Practices or HLPs.

Five faculty members from the Spring Arbor University (SAU) School of Education attended the forum and listened to the introductory presentations. The faculty members then attended an in-depth presentation of their choice, and the consensus among the SAU faculty was that the *TeachingWorks* model was more closely aligned to the purposes and practices within the program. This information was presented to the School of Education at faculty meetings and a vote to pursue membership within a new branch of *TeachingWorks*, The Michigan Program Network (known as MiPN or the "Network") was approved. The SAU application was submitted and in April of 2016, *TeachingWorks* invited the School of Education at SAU to join the MiPN along with the stellar teacher education programs from Eastern Michigan University, Central Michigan University, Grand Valley State University, Michigan Technological University, and Oakland University to form the network.

### *TeachingWorks*

According to a presentation by Ball and Forzani (2012), *TeachingWorks* originated from the initiative work among the U of M faculty that took place over a six-year period where they deliberated and identified a set of "high leverage practices" (HLPs) that "centered on the "teaching of practice, ethics of teaching, and integration of attention to diversity and equity with 'subject-matter serious' instruction" (*TeachingWorks* 2012). The outcome of these efforts was the establishment of an in-house organization referred to as *TeachingWorks*, which "focused on improving teachers' professional training and support by building strong infrastructure for the training, development, and assessment of teaching." Incorporated within *TeachingWorks* were five areas of emphasis (Ball and Forzani, 2012):

1. Advancing the development of a common professional core for teaching
2. Creating and distributing resources for a comprehensive practice-based curriculum
3. Building training for those who work with teachers
4. Conducting and using research on teaching, on professional training and assessment of teaching, and relations to students' learning
5. Advancing the case for the importance of teacher training

According to the *TeachingWorks* website (<http://www.teachingworks.org/about>) there are three desired outcomes for beginning teachers:

1. We want beginning teachers who are skillful at connecting with and helping their students develop.
2. Beginning teachers to effectively incorporate a set of well-designed, research-based Instructional practices (High-Leverage Practices—HLPs) into their classrooms.
3. Beginning teachers who know their subject area content material well, are aware of their students' cultural differences, and skillfully enact the HLPs within the content and context of their teaching.

In a 2011 presentation, Ball and Forzani stated that teacher education is due for a shift from theory-based learning to a “practice-focused teacher education” that trains beginning teachers to enter the classroom “safe to practice” and relates the importance of quality teaching has on student academic and social growth and development. Deborah Ball (2011), presenting at the CCSSO conference, declared that one of the problems with the current way of preparing teachers is that “there are no professionally grounded system(s) for teacher training” and cited a number of concerns with the process, including

1. The lack of a common curriculum for the professional training of teachers that is specific with professionally agreed-upon learning objectives for new or practicing teachers;
2. That there are over 2,000 independent providers of initial teacher training, and an uncountable number of providers of professional development;
3. That there are no common standards of performance for entry into teacher education programs with checkpoints verifying their readiness to conduct independent practice with (on) young people; and
4. That most licensure-level assessments focus on written assessments of knowledge rather than performance of practice.

To counter these deficiencies, she advocated for the establishment of training that focuses on “responsible practice.” This type of practice includes clearly specifying the skills and performances necessary for teacher candidates to successfully practice independently, through a detailed clinical training process that involves a sequential order of classroom exposure from “observation to simulation” and “supervised apprenticeship to supervised independent practice.” The culmination of this type of “responsible practice” would require a competency assessment before teacher candidates would be allowed to engage in independent practice.

Ball further asserted that *TeachingWorks* was a means for consideration in that it could

1. Advance the development of a common professional core for teaching;
2. Create and distribute resources for a comprehensive practice-based curriculum;
3. Build training for those who work with teachers; and
4. Conduct and use research on teaching, on professional training and assessment of teaching, and relations to students' learning to advance the performance proficiencies of beginning and new teachers.

### **The SAU Experience within the MiPN**

During the past two years, several SAU faculty members have actively participated in the MiPN. Although process forward has been slow at times, the pace has been deliberate and with purpose. To begin with, the MiPN is a first-in-the-nation approach to reforming teacher education. Thus, it has been a working process of trial and error. Bringing six institutions together required adequate time to build a common understanding of purpose and collegial trust. Throughout the first year the network negotiated several important milestones, which included getting to know each other, learning about each network member's program, and establishing a sense of community that valued the unique contributions and differences each member institution's program brought to teacher education in Michigan. Of course, much time was spent seeking to gain an understanding of *TeachingWorks* and the HLPs. Over time, group members experienced a sort of “collegial gelling” which resulted in the group operating with a sense of community complete with the values of shared trust and vulnerability. This included openly confiding the challenges and roadblocks they

were experiencing in understanding the role of *TeachingWorks*, the general goals of the MiPN, and their difficulties and successes in implementing principles of the HLPs within their respective institutional programs.

During that first academic year, MiPN members met in person or virtually seven times, with each member institution hosting a meeting on its campus. Each meeting included presentations by the *TeachingWorks* personnel to provide further insights on the particular HLPs on which we were working. *TeachingWorks* shared various videotaped interactions they had developed that depicted teachers and students interacting with one or multiple HLPs. Individual participants were grouped together in grade/content-specific groups, where they developed strategies for working with their teacher candidates on HLPs, with a specific focus on one HLP: Eliciting and Responding to Student Thinking. The group was encouraged to videotape their own teacher candidates practicing implementation of this HLP and to critically analyze the use of video as a means of improving teacher candidates' practice. The work of some groups advanced further than others, and interest among faculty from various institutions ebbed and flowed with levels of inconsistency. However, at the end of year one, the network members assessed the progress for the year and set goals for year two, which included selecting a new HLP (Leading a Class Discussion) on which to focus, with an emphasis on exploring the concepts of equitable practices and social justice in respect to teacher practices.

Year two brought about a continued building of collegial trust and appreciation of each other. The network continued to meet at each member's institution and began working via virtual meetings to make advances forward. Much discussion took place during the institutional meetings as concepts related to equitable practices and social justice in teacher practice were explored. Grade/content-area groups continued in their work related to the HLP Leading a Class Discussion. In addition, year two saw active members take a role within various leadership committees designed to advance the work of the MiPN to broader audiences outside of, and within, the MiPN institutions. In addition, two institutions added partnerships with local school districts, and *TeachingWorks* provided HLP training to designated cooperating teachers of current or soon-to-be student teachers to provide support and assessment of their efforts to implement specified HLPs during their respective professional internships.

Although the process was slow going, the established comradery and commitment of working together toward advancing a practice-based set of experiences for teacher candidates was rewarding for all involved. According to Karen Ahn, program director for *TeachingWorks*, in the first year:

It was essential that we build community as a network through doing real work: Without a safe space where we can struggle through learning together, where we [could] argue about things but still have a basic respect for each other in spite of those differences, we would grow authentically together. From this community, we were able to build consensus while having difficult conversations about race and equity in relationship to the preparation of teachers, which is what we worked through in year 2 (2017).

### **Benefits to SAU**

There were numerous benefits that Spring Arbor University gained, and continues to garner, from our membership in the MiPN. To begin with, being associated with five other highly recognized state university teacher preparation programs has elevated and validated our program as an innovative leader for teacher education reform on a statewide level. As *TeachingWorks* expanded their work into multiple states across the nation, the work of the MiPN also highlighted the SAU program as part of a nationwide movement related to practice-based teacher preparation reform. In addition, SAU gained much-needed resources from *TeachingWorks* including the provision of video cameras for use in our methodology courses, which incorporate HLP practice. Key *TeachingWorks* personnel traveled to SAU to present information regarding the *TeachingWorks* program to our faculty and education students and to observe our unique induction process for entry-level teacher candidates. Of course, none of our participation in the scheduled MiPN meetings would have been possible without the generous reimbursement of travel costs by *TeachingWorks*.

Lastly, as the only private and faith-based institution member of the MiPN, participation in the network allowed SAU to highlight the Christian/biblical virtues that distinctly define our program and to highlight those to our public university colleagues.

For many of the SAU faculty, as well as members of the MiPN, this provided a new type of dialogue whereby common levels of understanding and the undergirding values regarding the preparation of future teachers brought together both private and public institutions of higher education. In some respects, our joint efforts reminded me of the moral imperative that Charlotte Mason must have felt as she sought to reform the British system of education during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Mason, a dedicated Christian teacher, and later teacher of teachers, made such an impact on that educational system, and her work lives on today where it is found primarily within the homeschooling arena (Macaulay 2009). On her gravestone, part of the inscription included these, her own famous words: "Education is an atmosphere, a discipline, a life. I am. I can. I ought. I will for the children's sake" (Sampson 2005, 233). Teacher preparation is all about "the children's sake," and thus our moral imperative is to prepare teachers who know how to teach well from day one and improve their practice each day forward. Charlotte Mason would no doubt applaud the efforts of *TeachingWorks* and the MiPN.

### **Implications for other Christian Schools of Education**

It is my deeply held belief that Christian teacher preparation programs prepare some of the best teacher candidates across the nation. In her book *10 Traits of Highly Effective Teachers: How to Hire, Coach, and Mentor Successful Teachers*, Elaine McEwan-Adkins (2001) identifies the number-one trait and predictor of new teacher success as the passion and missional purpose that the teacher candidate possesses. Those traits exemplify what I believe to be the overwhelming type of teachers our programs produce. Our teacher candidates understand living their lives sacrificially in fulfilling a passionate calling from God. However, our program successes are oftentimes dwarfed and hidden in the shadows cast by the bigger, better-recognized, and better-financed public universities and colleges. Despite that lack of recognition, we remain faithful to our purposes to prepare quality teachers who enter into classrooms to love and serve. In a way, we run our programs as a "best kept secret" to the larger teacher-preparation community.

Spring Arbor University has been fortunate to join the Michigan Program Network, and although the *TeachingWorks* program is growing nationally, not every Christian teacher preparation program will come into direct contact with it. Setting that aside, there is a bigger picture to be considered through this experience. Had we not reached out to participate in this opportunity, our program today would still be somewhat of a mystery to our counterparts in the public arena. We would have remained hidden—maybe even "happily hidden." Instead, we took a risk, and surprisingly, we discovered that we are far ahead of our public counterparts in some things we do. In other areas, we need to do some catching up.

Overall, this has given us an opportunity to highlight our program and share how we purposely and proactively train teachers to go into classrooms well prepared with passion and missional purpose. In some instances, our counterparts have commented on how they wish they were able to emulate some of the things we do in our program. They often comment on how fortunate we are to have a close-knit staff who like each other and work well together. Jesus encouraged His followers to put their light on a stand "so that those who come in may see the light" (Luke 11:33). We can actively look for opportunities for our excellent programs to come out from behind the shadows and cast our light outward. Cooperating together with our public teacher-preparation counterparts allows us to tell our story, examine our program more intentionally, influence policy and practice, guide dialogue, grow collegial relationships, and learn to better our programs together—"for the children's sake."

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# Promising Practices in Online Teacher Preparation

Marla J. Lohmann, PhD  
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According to the National Center for Education Statistics, there are over five million postsecondary students in the United States taking online courses, and 18 percent of graduate students take their entire degree program online (U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics 2015). Knowing this, it is imperative that university faculty become proficient at effective online instruction. At Colorado Christian University (CCU), our master's curriculum and instruction programs are offered fully online in an asynchronous manner in order to meet the demands of busy adults and aspiring teachers in rural areas. With this in mind, it has become especially critical that we utilize best practices in online instruction. From our review of the literature and our own experiences, we recommend the following online teaching practices: building teacher-student relationships; frequent communication with students; Universal Design for Learning (UDL); instructor availability outside of traditional office hours; optional synchronous activities; and remote student teacher observation.

In the field of K–12 Education, one of the most effective interventions and teaching tools is for teachers to build relationships with students (Stage and Galanti 2017). The benefits of this teaching strategy extend to the university setting, both on-campus and online (Hagenauer and Volet 2014). When university faculty care for students by showing respect and helping students feel connected to the university, student motivation is increased (Komarraju, Musulkin, and Bhattacharya 2010). In addition, university faculty that are perceived to be approachable, due to behaviors such as responding to student communications in a timely manner and providing clear expectations for student conduct and student assignments, increase student motivation and students' feelings of connectedness to the university (Devlin and O'Shea 2012). Positive student-teacher relationships can be formed both through interactions outside of the course setting, as well as active-learning activities included in the course itself (Braxton, Milem, and Sullivan 2000). In the master's degree programs at Colorado Christian University (CCU), we seek to build quality professional relationships with our online students through a variety of methods, including the following: mailing handwritten welcome cards to students as they enter the program; the course instructor calling students before the beginning of a course; utilizing a prayer request discussion board for both students and faculty to share prayer requests; including a "Getting to Know You" discussion thread in all courses; providing optional synchronous activities; and welcoming student participation outside of traditional office hours. According to feedback from our students on teacher evaluations, the teacher-student relationship improves the learning experience, and one student described these efforts as creating a "welcoming environment for learning."

Our second recommended practice is frequent communication with students. Timely communication with students has previously been noted as critical for student success in the online learning environment (Bennett and Monds 2008) and students report feeling more connected to the course and content, as well as an increase in learning, when course instructors utilize frequent personalized communications with students (LaBarbera 2013). At CCU, this communication takes a variety of forms, including phone calls before the beginning of a course, phone calls to struggling students during a course, interactions on the course discussion boards, a weekly email from the course instructor outlining the weekly expectations, and optional synchronous discussions via Twitter and Blackboard Collaborate.

Thirdly, we recommend the use of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). UDL is based on the idea that diversity among students is predictable and that systematic adjustments to the curriculum should be made based on that predictability; UDL addresses variability in the recognition, strategic, and affective networks (Glass, Meyer, and Rose 2013). University faculty who utilize UDL make adjustments to the ways in which students access information, the manner in which students demonstrate their knowledge, and the strategies used to enhance student motivation for learning the course content (Rose and Strangman 2007). At CCU, we utilize the concepts of UDL in a variety of ways. When designing our course content, we draw from a range of sources, including textbooks, articles and other readings, online learning modules from the U.S. Department of Education and other research-based entities, videos, audio recordings, PowerPoint presentations, and visual representations. We ask our students to demonstrate their knowledge by writing papers, creating presentations for various stakeholders, designing visual representations of content, engaging in discussions, creating lesson plans, examining case studies, and drafting mock documents such as individual education plans (IEPs), functional behavior assessments (FBAs), and behavior intervention plans (BIPs). Finally, we use a few strategies to increase student motivation, and we provide several ways for students to engage with course content. We have found that personal interactions between students and faculty increase motivation; CCU students report a higher level of motivation to do well in a course when the course instructor is actively engaged in the course and with the students. We increase student engagement through the use of varied presentations of course content and course assignments, applying information learned in the course to real-world experiences, timely and specific feedback on student work, and by offering optional synchronous learning experiences.

The next practice is the availability of the course instructor through a variety of mediums at times outside of traditional office hours. Prior research has indicated that online students value having access to faculty (Fahy, Spencer, and Halinski 2008) and that they are unlikely to utilize course instructor office hours but instead prefer other forms of communication (Huang and Hsiao 2012). At CCU, we have found this to be true; our students have busy schedules that differ from one another and from the schedule of course instructors. While each instructor offers two to three online office hours each week, students rarely utilize these times for asking questions or getting clarifications. Instead, we have found that students are more likely to request assistance during the times when they are working on their coursework (often mornings, evenings, and weekend hours). It is not uncommon for course instructors to receive emails in the middle of the night. We have also found that students have differing preferences for how they like to communicate with the instructor; some students prefer written communications, while others prefer to speak with the instructor. To address the need, we have found it beneficial to offer a variety of ways for students to communicate with the course instructor, including email, phone calls, and text message. We do not require that all communication occur during the set office hours, but most course instructors have set guidelines for acceptable times to receive phone calls or text messages. Over the past year, we have found that the majority of students choose to communicate with the course instructor via text message in the afternoon and early evening hours. According to a 2011 survey by the Pew Research Center, Americans send over 40 text messages per day on average, so students' preference for communicating with the course instructor via text message is not surprising (Smith 2011).

In addition, we recommend the use of both synchronous and asynchronous learning activities. While our programs at CCU have been designed as asynchronous programs to provide the flexibility needed by our students, we have found that students benefit from optional synchronous activities. The use of synchronous learning activities is supported by a 2014 study by Amos that found that about 97% of online students report learning more during synchronous discussions than through the use of asynchronous discussion boards (Amos 2014). Two synchronous activities that we find to be effective are weekly class discussions via Blackboard Collaborate and Twitter chats on a general topic related to education. Many of our course instructors offer one weekly Blackboard Collaborate session per course. These sessions range in length from 30 to 90 minutes, and the structure of the session varies by course instructor, but all the sessions provide students with the opportunity to ask questions and to discuss the weekly course content in real time with one another and with the course instructor. In the course teacher evaluations, students frequently mention that they like the real-time discussions that are offered via Blackboard Collaborate, but also appreciate that these sessions are optional to provide the flexibility that is critical in their busy lives.

In addition, the master's degree program in special education offers an optional weekly Twitter chat. Previous research found that students report increased learning and more engagement with classmates when social media is incorporated in online courses (Slamon, Ross, and Pechenkina 2015). Each chat is open to all students in the special education program, regardless of which courses they are currently taking, and the chats focus on a topic of relevance to graduate school, special education, or the field of teaching in general. After each live Twitter session, the chat is archived via Storify, and the archive link is posted so that all students can access the chat information later. While we have found the use of Twitter to be an effective teaching practice, it should be noted, however, that some students prefer to keep social media as a private activity and dislike engaging in academic work on social media (Tess 2013).

Finally, the use of remote teacher candidate observation seems to be an emerging practice in the field of online teacher preparation. Previous research has indicated that this practice can be a valuable tool for supervising teacher candidates in rural communities (Bondie 2015). Synchronous video observations have been effectively utilized to observe teacher candidates in both field placements and student teaching experiences (Schmidt et al. 2015). While synchronous teacher candidate observations appear to be an emerging practice, they do not allow teacher candidates to go back and review their lesson to better understand the comments made by the supervisor. In order to allow for this, recorded video observations may be beneficial; at CCU, we are utilizing these asynchronous video observations. Like our in-seat observations, the teacher candidates we remotely observe receive three to four observations over the course of a semester and are evaluated using the same rubric. Our teacher candidates feel that student behaviors are less impacted by the use of video than by the presence of another adult in the classroom and that being able to view the video after teaching a lesson allowed them to better see their own teaching strengths and weaknesses. In order to ensure student confidentiality, we have created a specific protocol that includes school district administration written permission, two levels of security in the submission of videos, and deleting all recordings at the end of the semester.

While the online arena is still a relatively new locale for teacher preparation and the research into effective online teaching practices is limited, our experience leads us to believe that these strategies—building teacher-student relationships, frequent communication with students, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), instructor availability outside of traditional office hours, optional synchronous activities, and remote student teacher observation—will increase effectiveness of a teacher preparation program. Over the next several years, we are looking forward to refining our practices and learning more about effective online teacher preparation.

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# Preparing Students for Overseas Student Teaching

John M. Williams

## Introduction

This paper addresses how Spring Arbor University (SAU) prepares students who desire to complete their student teaching internships in an international setting. Spring Arbor University is a Christian liberal arts university located in south central Michigan, with approximately 1,500 campus-based undergraduate students, and a School of Education of approximately 300. Our Christ-centered mission is to develop and empower professional educators committed to student learning in a global society. One of the unique characteristics of SAU is that all traditional campus-based undergraduates are required to complete a cross-cultural experience of at least three weeks outside of the United States. SAU also allows teacher candidates to student teach outside of Michigan and internationally, after the preparation activities discussed in this paper.

## History

Spring Arbor University has a history of preparing teachers to teach in missionary schools and Christian schools throughout the world. In the spring of 1988, representatives of a group of Christian colleges met to explore the possibility of a network to coordinate overseas cross-cultural placements for student teachers. David Pollock of Interaction International, Inc., was also present and agreed that his organization could facilitate overseas placements. Representatives continued to meet to work out details for the establishment of a member organization to be called the Christian College Teacher Education Coordinating Council (CCTECC). In October 1990 the constitution and bylaws were approved, as well as a contract with Interaction. Dr. Merlin Ager of Cedarville University was elected as the first president of CCTECC.

Overseas student teacher placements began in the 1991–92 school year, made by Interaction. As part of the placement process, it was agreed that students would be required to attend a weekend-long pre-experience orientation (PEO) the semester before their overseas placement. There are now 25 Christian college and university members of CCTECC, and over 1,000 student teachers have been placed in international schools.

## History of Spring Arbor University Preparation and Support for International Teaching

All SAU students complete a three-credit Issues and Cultures course, COL200, in which they study cultural, ethnic, and racial diversity, and reflect on the implications of Christian faith for personal vocation and critical participation in

the world today. Teacher education students take an additional diversity course, The Diverse Learner, EDU271 (or 273 for Special Education students).

Prior to their student teaching placement and pre-experience orientation through Interaction/CCTECC, SAU students must have completed their SAU cross-cultural preparation and experience (COL274/275) and complete a one-credit independent study course (EDU290) in which they read Pollock and VanReken's *Third Culture Kids: The Experience of Growing Up Among Worlds* (2010), and interview students who attended international schools and teachers who have taught in international schools.

In addition, SAU students who choose to pursue an optional International Leadership endorsement complete two independent study courses (EDU290 and 390) and COM368: Intercultural Communication or SOC314: Cultural Anthropology, and credential certification from ACSI.

During their international student teaching placement, students have an SAU supervisor and are enrolled in an online seminar. This provides weekly communication and support as well as interaction with other student teachers. In addition to on-site mentoring and evaluations by the cooperating teacher and principal, students provide videos to the SAU supervisor.

### **Benefits of International Student Teaching**

There are many documented benefits from an international student teaching program, not only for the university students, but for the international school, the university, and even for PK–12 schools in the United States that may hire these teachers in the future.

*Benefits to the student teacher.* The obvious benefit is an enhanced global perspective through participating first-hand in another culture with diverse learners. This wider preparation often pays dividends when applying for jobs, whether internationally or in the States. Common outcomes from multiple institutions and students who have completed part or all of their student teaching overseas include increased confidence and self-reliance, varied teaching methods, and empathy for diverse learners (Landwehr 2012, 9).

*Benefits to the international school.* The international school benefits from the connection to U.S. colleges and universities, and potential future teachers. CCTECC's self-study (2006) showed that 30% of international student teachers applied and were initially employed by an international school, and another 10% returned to teach overseas after an initial U.S. teaching job. These international teacher hires enter their positions with greater cultural sensitivity, confidence, and self-reliance (Landwehr 2012, 10). Introducing the possibility of student teaching in an international school is one way to encouraging future teachers to have a global perspective.

*Benefits to the university.* The university benefits by the enhancement of its reputation and potential to attract students of international schools as future students. One way international K–12 students are introduced first-hand to colleges and universities they may want to consider is by interacting with student teachers or graduates of a particular college or university. The same may be true for international teachers considering online graduate programs.

*Benefits to U.S. schools.* Students who decide to teach in the U.S. after their overseas student teaching placement bring a broader global perspective (Quezada 2004, 462). Most U.S. teachers have very little experience traveling or working with intercultural groups (Landwehr 2012, 8). Candidates who have student taught overseas have an experiential advantage, demonstrate increased confidence and self-reliance, utilize varied teaching methods, and show a deeper ability to relate to diverse learners (Landwehr 2012).

## Conclusion

Our experience at Spring Arbor University confirms what the research shows: that an overseas student teaching program benefits the student teacher in terms of skills and dispositions, international K–12 students, the university, and PK–12 schools in the U. S. and overseas. Christian colleges and universities may want to consider membership in CCTECC ([www.interactionintl.org/CCTECC](http://www.interactionintl.org/CCTECC)); our membership in CCTECC facilitates overseas placements and helps prepare students for overseas placements, and provides opportunities for collaboration with other member institutions.

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# Growth Mindset: Preparing 21st-Century Christian Educators

Ellen Lowrie Black and  
Judith S. Bethge

Perhaps every generation of educators has struggled with understanding and relating to their students and learners. Cultural shifts and outside influences on our students escalate. For better or worse, technology invades every area of our lives. Historical perspectives change as key events in one generation seem irrelevant to another. Understanding and navigating generational challenges must be a commitment of Christian educators who believe God has called them to impact and pass on truth to the next generation.

## **Biblical Model**

The book of Nehemiah provides insight into almost all leadership challenges and dilemmas, including the generational challenge. Briefly, after the wall was complete, Ezra the priest came before the people to read the scrolls; and for the first time, the people of Jerusalem heard the words Moses had recorded. Of interest for our purpose is that the people chosen to hear God's word included "the men and women and those who could understand." Nehemiah 8 goes on to list by name the teachers who "helped the people understand the Law ... they read distinctly ... and they gave the sense, and helped them to understand the reading" (NKJV). Every generation was included. All had a right to be taught, and there were teachers and Levites who had the responsibility to make certain learning took place. This is differentiated instruction and Piaget's developmental theory illustrated thousands of years ago.

## **Gen Y, Millennials**

Teacher education programs are now preparing individuals for Gen Z classrooms (those born between 1995 and 2015). The majority of traditional undergraduate students are Millennials or Gen Y (those born between 1980 and 1994). Of course, there is some overlap.

In *Generation Me*, Jean Twenge (2014) synthesizes over thirty generation studies involving 11 million people. GenMe, or Millennials, were raised to be individuals with their own moral compass, to pursue their dreams and be whatever makes them happy. And yet, "this is a time of soaring expectations and crushing realities ... the gap between what they have and what they want has never been greater" (Twenge 2014, 3). GenMe has high expectations, wanting it all quickly. There can be a disconnect between the role that time, practice, and effort play to achieve goals. This plays out frequently as students have grade expectations (all A's of course) that may not mirror the work completed. The challenge for today's educators is that student satisfaction and their "feelings" are prioritized. Students now Facebook their administrators or their spouses to complain about a slight or a bad grade.

## Gen Z, Millennials on Steroids

Generation Z is known as the most technologically literate generation. Generation Z is the generation with Wi-Fi in their pocket (Schwabel 2015). They are more environmentally and socially conscious than previous generations. Generation Z is aware of what is happening in the world. They are tech savvy and expect more than previous generations in terms of flexibility and quick turnaround. Beyond this, personality traits are hard to define because the generation is still emerging as well as being the most diverse generation (Terry 2015).

However, emerging research regarding the influence of the internet on individual development paints a negative picture. The impact on cognitive, social, and physical development alerts educators to key areas that should not be ignored. Cognitive influences include the inability to remember and inability to focus on reading and writing; social influences include stress and depression, isolation, and health problems; physical influences overlap with increases in obesity, and lack of face-to-face personal expression and development. The findings conclude that this generation is stressed, bored, lazy, and depressed (Issa and Isias 2016). Additional alarms should be sounded regarding the now common practice of young people sending pornographic images: “A recent survey found that 28% of 15- and 16-year olds had sent nude pictures of themselves by email or text—and 57% had been asked to. It is so common it even has a clever name: sexting” (Twenge 2014, 51).

The temptation for educators is to complain and commiserate about the generations with which they work. However, educators’ mandate is to lead and raise up the next generation of educators, recognizing that God is not surprised nor perplexed by the changes in culture. The challenge is to grow next-generation educators. The mission remains the same while strategies must adapt. Given the generational differences and traits of learners, attention should also be turned to a phenomenon common to all educators and learners—*mindset*. The supporting research—which is described in this paper, along with implications for the classroom instructor—provides a framework for growing educators.

## Growth Mindset

For over 30 years, Carol Dweck from Stanford University has studied the implicit beliefs of people toward their understanding of intelligence and whether intelligence is a fixed concept or a quality that can grow and change through hard work and effort. The popular literature uses the terms *growth mindset* and *fixed mindset* to distinguish the two sets of assumptions about the malleability of intelligence. Growth mindset is the name given to a person’s deeply held belief that the concept of intelligence is changeable and can be developed through effort, experience, and strategies rather than a fixed and unchangeable quality about a person. Much of the research on mindset focuses on cultivating a growth mindset in students in the K–12 environment but increasingly in undergraduate student populations.

The implications of understanding and cultivating a growth mindset around the concept of intelligence impact both instructor and student. For the Christian educator, the imperative to “be transformed by the renewal of your mind” (Romans 11:2, ESV) reinforces the prominence of the thought life influencing attitudes and behaviors. This section will describe the importance of mindset, explore the impact of mindset on learning, and discuss why cultivating a growth mindset is important for both educators and learners, especially those entrusted with training up the next generation of teachers.

## Defining Mindset

Growth and fixed mindset are the labels given to the implicit theories of intelligence popularized by Dweck (2006) about whether a person believes that intelligence is changeable or static (Yeager and Dweck 2012). Implicit theories are the core beliefs and assumptions people make about themselves and the world around them, which frame the way they interpret and interact in life (Dweck, Chiu, and Hong 1995; Yeager and Dweck 2012). These theories of self are called implicit because they are not openly visible but operate at a deeper level of routine in the mind—often remaining unquestioned or unexamined in the everyday setting of life (Yeager and Dweck 2012).

Mindset research focuses around two distinct viewpoints about the malleability or changeability of intelligence (Dweck, Chiu, and Hong 1995; Dweck 2006; Yeager and Dweck 2012). Incremental theorists view intelligence as a characteristic that can be changed or grown through experience and feedback. Entity theorists view intelligence as a fixed or unchangeable quality that is inherited and stable. Mindset becomes a lens through which to interpret life experiences as stories “about the transformative power of effort ... to change your ability and to change you as a person” (Dweck 2006, 42). Generally, in the literature, a growth mindset is considered to be an adaptive quality while a fixed mindset is seen as a maladaptive quality (Sevincer, Kluge, and Oettingen 2014). While Dweck is careful to not make moral judgments about people who tend toward a fixed mindset (Dweck, Chiu, and Hong 1995; Dweck 2015a), mindset orientation is a significant contributor to the attitudes of people toward learning and effort not only for themselves but also in relationship to others.

*Mindset matters.* Mindset impacts motivation and achievement (Haimovitz and Dweck 2016) as well as the way individuals elaborate on ideas and goals for themselves which reveal how they deal with setbacks (Sevincer, Kluge, and Oettingen 2014). Mindset beliefs influence whether a person undertakes performance-focused goals to validate their set beliefs of their ability or mastery-focused to learn and expand their ability (Haimovitz, Wormington, and Corpus 2011; Huang 2011; King 2012). In turn, the motivation for action grounded in the mindset influences the attitudes and behaviors undertaken. The apostle Paul references a growth mindset when stating, “When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish things” (1 Corinthians 13:11, ESV).

*Mindset impacts effort, challenge, and risk.* Mindset impacts the way in which individuals pursue goals, which may lead to better goal-attainment behaviors for growth mindset holders (Sevincer, Kluge, and Oettingen 2014). Mindset also informs how individuals perceive failure. What people perceive about their self greatly affects both outlook and response, especially in the face of adversity (Schunk and Pajares 2005). For fixed mindset holders, “failure may reveal permanent inadequacies that cannot be remedied through personal effort. This can lead to a lower level of overall well-being” (King 2012, 708). A recent study explored how children may form their mindset from the way in which they perceive their parents’ beliefs about failure (Haimovitz and Dweck 2016). As teacher educators, exploring instructor beliefs about failure and what defines success and growth can set a model for future replication that the teacher-student can in turn use in his or her own classroom community. How those beliefs are communicated to members in the classroom community carries generational implications.

Additionally, fixed mindset holders are likely to account for the “lion’s share” of the overconfidence effect seen in many studies, which means that fixed mindset holders overestimate their abilities much more so than their growth mindset counterparts (Ehrlinger, Mitchum, and Dweck 2016, 98). Consequently, mindset impacts the accuracy of one’s judgment about oneself and has implications on the strategies or lack thereof employed toward reaching goals. Holding a fixed mindset also makes one more likely to be judgmental and have low expectations for one’s own and others’ performance based off a single incident of low performance (Rattan, Good, and Dweck 2012). For teacher education programs, instructor awareness of mindset and instructor beliefs about failure in learning how to teach and coach teachers is vital to promoting a culture of growth within the classroom and field experiences, as well as managing overconfidence within teaching candidates. Overconfident teacher candidates may resist helpful feedback during the critical period of pre-service fieldwork and become difficult to teach or coach.

Likewise, people who hold a fixed mindset are less likely to invest in another person’s improvement and development via coaching or mentoring if they believe that substantial change in that person is unlikely (Heslin and VandeWalle 2008). As Christian educators, Paul remarks that “we are God’s fellow workers” by planting and watering but it is “only God who gives the growth” (1 Corinthians 3:7). Whether the planting and watering is in the classroom or a teacher education program, equipping new and experienced teachers recognizes the room for God to do His part—the growing.

*Mindset across domains.* Mindset influences all domains of life including school, sports, personal relationships, business, and leadership (Dweck 2006). A person may hold conflicting or differing mindset beliefs about intelligence or ability in different domains. For example, a student may hold different mindsets about academic ability as opposed to athletic ability (Sevincer, Kluge, and Oettingen 2014). Within the school environment, students may also experience different mindsets depending on the content area or class—especially in math (Yeager and Dweck 2012). There can even be a difference in mindset based on role with teacher-coaches having a stronger growth mindset than general classroom teachers (Stenzel 2015). When people justify their levels of competency in a domain based on an innate level of talent, such statements reveal a potential stronghold of fixed mindset. Dweck (2015a) acknowledges that people are likely a mixture of both fixed and growth mindsets. However, mindset may indeed have a spillover effect between domains, overall well-being, and adjustment (King 2012). For teachers and parents, the key to growing an authentic growth mindset according to Dweck (2015a) is being in touch with the fixed mindset triggers and thoughts in order to cultivate an authentic growth mindset. Providing opportunities to unpack the nuances of mindset beliefs within the classroom and between teaching domains or aptitudes within the curriculum of teacher education programs may give teaching candidates and experienced teachers insights into perceived roadblocks or personal constraints in their pedagogy or classrooms.

*Mindset contradictions.* Teachers who report a growth mindset may behave in ways that significantly undermine their espoused belief, e.g., focusing on recordkeeping tasks rather than student engagement during class time; pre-framing tasks as easy or hard; or rewarding academic competition between students or classes over individual efforts at growth (Schmidt, Shumow, and Kackar-Cam 2015). As educators of the next generation of teachers, helping pre-service teachers to identify how behaviors reflect mindset and explore the underlying beliefs behind those behaviors in context may aid in cultivating authentic growth mindsets in these teacher candidates.

*Contradictory behaviors and belief.* Teachers with a fixed mindset are more likely to judge and label a student as low ability after just one poor performance (Rattan et al. 2015). Additionally, the comments and type of feedback given to students may not emphasize effort or the importance of challenge in the learning process and unintentionally serve to demotivate students to avoid effort and challenge (Schmidt, Shumow and Kackar-Cam 2015). This contradictory behavior between expressed mindset belief and action is different from the comforting behaviors demonstrated by teachers holding fixed mindsets who believe their comfort feedback is helpful (Rattan, Good and Dweck 2012). Schmidt, Shumow and Kackar-Cam (2015) found the teacher may not have been aware of the impact of her instructional act given her relative lack of experience while in Rattan, Good and Dweck (2012), the teachers knew they were using the comforting feedback strategy with good intentions but did not realize that it was not helpful. Instructors in teacher education should be aware of the language they use when encouraging or comforting struggling students to avoid reinforcing fixed beliefs in aptitude or performance. Including the struggle and challenge of learning as part of the process in feedback orientates towards a growth perspective.

*False growth mindsets.* Given the rise in *false growth mindsets* noted by both Dweck (2015a; 2016) and Varlas (2016), this is an area that needs further research. Dweck (2016) updated her 2006 book *Mindset* to include a section on the false growth mindset phenomenon that she observed seep into teacher practice and research. False growth mindset reflects an over-simplified belief that growth mindset can be developed through praise for effort regardless of learning or progress, blaming student mindset when expectations are not met, and telling students they can do anything without helping them build the skills and strategies to reach their goals (Dweck 2016, December 16). One solution is, “Building an environment where mindsets are available for inspection and change opens the doors for students to see new interpretations for action in their lives” (Conklin and Hartman 2014, 292). For instructors and educators, awareness of the false mindset and conscientious reflection and examination of motives with practices may provide opportunities to help students guard against a shallow practice that could potentially harm students.

*Mindset is changeable.* Even though mindset transformation may be harder in adults, the change is not impossible as research suggests self-concept change among professionals transitioning from other careers into teaching can occur, albeit

with great effort and struggle (Snyder 2011; Snyder, Oliveira, and Paska 2013). More research around adult mindset transformation is needed to fill a gap in the research. Regardless of the trend, research indicates that mindset does not have to be or remain fixed. In fact, Dweck (2015a) states that the “path to a growth mindset is a journey, not a proclamation” and a person cannot simply will a shift to happen, but must experience an awareness and struggle along the path.

### **Building Educator Mindsets**

Building a culture towards growth mindset in any classroom level begins with the instructor. This is true both for teacher educators *and* for their students who are training to be teachers. Teacher educators can model a growth mindset and accompanying behaviors in the classroom, as well as explicitly work with their students to prepare them for their own work as teachers. Following are three suggestions for how instructors can model a growth mindset approach to teaching and learning.

First, instructors need to spend time examining their own implicit beliefs about intelligence—what do they *really* believe about their own abilities and those of their students? Where do they put up roadblocks to effort or risk? Are they reluctant to learn a new skill or try something different with their students? Are they willing to seek out trusted feedback, a coach, or mentor to help them get better or more effective at something?

Second, instructors should look at the messaging in their classrooms. Do their mindset beliefs match up with their actions? How do they give feedback? Is it specific and timely? Do they focus solely on performance outcomes or do they look at the process and effort as a precursor to the result? Do they provide opportunities in their classroom to give feedback for work “in-process”?

And third, instructors should create a plan to address risk and failure—how they respond to failure in the moment for both themselves and their students may be the strongest catalyst to growth. Instructors need to remember that points of failure are also times of significant vulnerability but also great opportunities to increase resiliency and learning. How can they communicate to their students that the struggle is a normal and needed part of success? How can they intentionally model risk-taking in their classroom or with students’ own goals? How can they celebrate the learning that occurs when things do not turn out as anticipated? Classroom instructors should make their thinking about these three areas connected to growth mindset known and cultivate a culture where growth and learning is prioritized.

### **Conclusion**

In the end, mindset beliefs about intelligence are a common filter of experiences regardless of generational or other trait differences. Growth and fixed mindset beliefs impact not only the student in the K–12 classroom, but also the young adult in undergraduate studies, the pre-service teacher learning a new craft, the experienced teacher in the classroom, and the instructor or mentor in the graduate-level program. How a person views and understands the nature of not only their own intelligence but also the intelligence of others influences the way in which a person understands and makes sense of the world and the challenges faced in learning new things or improving a skill. Mindset charts the trajectory for a person’s journey in the world of knowing and doing—whether it will be a limited excursion or a continual iterative exploration of new lands.

As mentioned in the beginning of this paper, the current cohort of students populating K–12 as well as college classrooms present generation-specific challenges as learners. As educators and instructors, modeling and cultivating a growth mindset orientation in today’s students will better prepare them to embrace the challenges of 21st-century teaching and learning and nurture the resilience essential to overcome the difficulties of navigating their journeys as educators.

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# Education for Kingdom Living

William F. Cox, Jr., PhD

Theologians tell us that the main message of Jesus as well as the main message of the Bible is God's kingdom (Bright 1981). In the Old Testament, the term *kingdom* referred primarily either to earthly empires under a king's reign (1 Samuel 15:28) or to God's reign in heaven (1 Chronicles 29:11). Essentially they were two separate spheres. Yet in the New Testament, Jesus specifically said that He came to bring God's kingdom to earth (Matthew 6:10, 33) and to give His people the privilege of overlaying the kingdom of earth with God's kingdom (Matthew 13:11, 38; 19:14), apparently until He creates a new heaven and a new earth (2 Peter 3:13). Until that time, Christians have the responsibility of equipping for Kingdom citizenship. Kingdom education thus embodies a huge responsibility in that matter.

The purpose of this article is to explain the nature of Kingdom education. A succinct expression of Kingdom education is that it involves drawing out—that is, authenticating—the “gold” of each person's *imago Dei* identity for destiny fulfillment. Paraphrasing Chodron, “our true nature is like a precious jewel that we have to recover from the soil” (Kelly-Gangl 2016, 98). This nature can be captured in three essential concepts: *imago Dei* identity; divine destiny; and authentication. For the first, the working proposition is that each person (Christian and non-Christian alike) carries the basic characteristics or nature of God, i.e., the *imago Dei*. Such qualities include love, desire for competency and excellence, justice, compassion, etc. In other words, the qualities of God revealed in the Bible are possessed (with exceptions such as omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience, and absolute authority) by all humans. And because they are God qualities, they are, by definition, inherently motivated toward maturity, hence destiny. Authentication means to lovingly impart honorable credibility to the personalized nature of God in each person. The process of authentication essentially operates by the principle “Like attracts and begets like” (cf. Proverbs 18:21a). God is the “gold standard,” and each person's movement toward fulfillment (i.e., divine destiny) of those internally resident qualities (i.e., *imago Dei*) constitute what is known as flourishing. Quoting Erasmus, “The summit of happiness is reached when a person is ready to be what he is” (Kelly-Gangl 2016, 63).

## Human Nature, History, and the Role of Education

While often misunderstood if not simply ignored, the success of educational efforts is highly dependent upon having a correct understanding of the nature of humans. A reasonable way to begin to understand human nature is by way of a brief review of the “time eras” of human history, particularly as related to educational practice.

## Creation

In the creation time era, Adam and Eve were directly and exclusively attuned to God with no counter-qualities. The following four categories related to human nature provide a baseline for addressing educational practices in four biblical time eras. Specifically for the creation time era:

1. Relationship with God—Foundational to everything, Adam and Eve were created (Genesis 1:26–27) to live in intimate relationship with God as His image-bearing creations. (This expectation in New Testament times occurs through the marvelous event of being born again and empowered by the Holy Spirit.) And as a function of carrying God’s love nature, human relationships would always be of that same genre. (This is a precursor to the two Greatest Commandments in the New Testament era.)
2. Reproduce—Bestowing high majestic honor, God’s first directive to Adam and Eve was for them to reproduce others in their (and thus His) image (Genesis 1:28). Said differently, God wanted to be blessed with an expanding family of His image-bearers. (This is a precursor to the Great Commission in the New Testament time era.)
3. Dominion Mandate—Directly contingent upon population expansion, God wanted them to rule over the nonhuman environment (Genesis 1:28) just as He would. (This dominion mandate sets the standard for much of what occurs thereafter in schooling, academics, etc.)
4. Self-governance—God made it clear that these activities were to be in self-governance rooted in the single restriction to not eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:17). (This is precursor to what is often referred to as discipleship or Christian character development.) In fact, this personal choice-with-consequences paradigm suggests a methodology for character development.

In summary, humans were to live in the context of interpersonal and intrapersonal relationship with God, self, and an ever-increasing number of other sinless humans while carrying out the task of taking dominion over the nonhuman environment. In living this way, they and their offspring would be destiny-aligned for flourishing by living true to their pure *imago Dei* identity. As near as can be determined, there was no need for education in this time era. In fact, God’s grant of liberty to Adam for naming each and every animal (Genesis 2:19) suggests that Adam was fully equipped, thereby needing no education for this prototypical task.

## The Fall

The second time era originated with humanity’s disobedience to God. Relationships with God, self, others, and the physical environment were literally corrupted. Everything, in a sense, became adversarial. Most importantly, the primary fissure was humanity’s willful disconnect from God. This broken relationship with God, coupled with the resultant sin nature, deeply inhibited flourishing as God had originally intended.

Over the many years of this second time era, success was highly dependent on being properly educated about all aspects of life. But tragically, it was about people with an active sin nature teaching learners who also possessed the sin nature. Most importantly, relationship with God was still priority number one, but now it was primarily about obedience. By and large, restoration of relationship with God was via rule-based compliance. Overall, education now played a major role in the four education-related categories initially addressed at creation:

1. Relationship with God—With the death of humanity’s God-centered spiritual nature, relationship with God was essentially by way of rule-based compliance (cf. Exodus 20). Therefore, rules had to be learned and enforced.
2. Reproduce—The universal fact of sinners giving birth to sinners gave education a key role regarding bringing matters such as reproduction into obedience to God (cf. Deuteronomy 4–6).
3. Dominion Mandate—The rule of sinners over the nonhuman environment called for educationally driven methods for godly understanding and management of that environment as well as in passing that knowledge on to others.
4. Self-Governance—Education was a main avenue toward equipping for biblically obedient self-governance.

## Redemption

Jesus, being absolutely necessary, ushered in the third era of human history through His sacrificial death, conquering the sin nature and restoring mankind to God. In this era, education was again necessary. Even with the conquering by Jesus of the sin nature, every aspect of restoration of the *imago Dei* has educational implications.

The prime educational focus in this orientation has often been equipping for the dominion mandate with a lesser concern for nurturing a personal relationship with the Lord. Bible-based compliance remains the *modus operandi*—rather than personally relating to and revealing God. We might call this orientation that of being an “educator who happens to be a Christian.”

Wherever the emphasis properly switches from dominion mandate competence to a personal relationship with God, we then have “Christians who are educators.” Even so in this time era there is typically very little emphasis on bringing the kingdom of God to earth and being trained for discipleship as a member of the literal Body of Christ (cf. Ephesians 1:17). Accordingly:

1. Relationship with God—Even with restoration of a personal relationship with God, education for dominion mandate obedience has remained the predominant role for Christian education.
2. Reproduce—Husband and wife, as in the previous time era, give birth to sin-infected children, thus requiring teaching for biblical living (Ephesians 6:4).
3. Dominion Mandate—Most Christians inaccurately believe that naturalistic methods alone are the educational focus for ruling over the material world (cf. Matthew 14:17).
4. Self-Governance—Self-governance is perceived, shortsightedly, as essentially about managing and punishing sin (cf. Luke 9:54–56), thus calling for education to equip for biblical obedience.

## Holy Spirit Empowerment

For all the good that Jesus did in His coming to earth (e.g., John 3:16–17), paradoxically, even more good occurred in His departure. This fourth time era of human history resulted from the reason why Jesus returned to heaven (John 16:7). Specifically, He left earth so that His Spirit could simultaneously live inside everyone, thereby enabling them to do what Jesus did (John 14:12) after He was baptized in the Holy Spirit (cf. Luke 4:1, 14). Accordingly, those baptized in the Holy Spirit can bring the supernatural aspects of God into the temporal realm in which all people live.

In this era, the education focus is on edifying the Holy-Spirit-empowered *imago Dei* of each and every learner, with the Holy Spirit intentionally invited into every educational activity. God’s kingdom constitutes the atmosphere of the educational venue, and supernatural manifestations are the expected way of life. Additionally, with a primary focus on eternity, dominion-mandate-type teachings and even possession of a biblical worldview become secondary to abiding in a dynamic relationship with the Trinity. It is where each student’s personalized *imago Dei* identity is nurtured, such that the student is on track with his/her God-inspired destiny. As elaborated below, the educational orientation in this era might best be labeled as “Kingdom citizens who are supernaturally focused, *educos* educators” (in Latin, the word *educos* means “to draw out”).

1. Relationship with God—Based in the restored relationship with God, education focuses on experientially partnering with Him in educational endeavors (cf. Matthew 19:14).
2. Reproduce—Husband and wife as saints nonetheless give birth to sin-infected children, thus requiring teaching and modeling, especially about being experientially in love with God (cf. Colossians 3:18–21).
3. Dominion Mandate—The fallen world is treated as prime for educationally driven natural and supernatural influence (cf. John 2:6–10).
4. Self-Governance—Self-governance is perceived as naturally and joyfully living within the good pleasure of an adoring, forgiving Father (cf. Luke 15:20).

With this final view of education, God's involvement in learning becomes not only normative, but also eagerly anticipated and readily acknowledged. While Kingdom educators can testify to this in the lives of their students and in their own experiences, there are many documented instances of public figures experiencing God's presence and power in their learning. For example, G. W. Carver learned from God about the peanut (Benge and Benge 2001), Dr. Ben Carson passed a mandatory chemistry class via divine revelation (Carson and Murphey 1990), Samuel Morse gave God credit for telegraph invention, and Matt McPherson saw a vision from God for how to design the compound bow. For the Kingdom educator, these kinds of educe experiences are initiated, accomplished, and sustained by and through relationship with God.

### **Kingdom Education Principles**

There are several underlying principles from Scripture that can be identified as supporting Kingdom education practices. It is important to recognize that these principles can be adapted to various educational contexts and situations. These principles from Scripture include the following:

1. Words and actions of biblical agreement bring God's presence (Philippians 4:8–9).
2. God's presence with us is our greatest strength and joy (Nehemiah 8:10).
3. There is life and death in the power of the tongue (Proverbs 16:24, 18:21).
4. Believers are saints, no longer sinners (1 Corinthians 1:2, NKJV).
5. Divine cause and effect: seek first His kingdom and His righteousness and all things will be added to you (Matthew 6:33).
6. Like attracts and begets like (Proverbs 16:24, 18:21).
7. Love is God in action, and is the most powerful force in the universe (1 Corinthians 13; Matthew 27:45–53).
8. Humans have inborn "knowledge of" or "desire for" God (Ecclesiastes 3:11; Romans 1:18, 21).
9. Freedom to be whom God created (Proverbs 22:6) promotes flourishing.

In addition to these specific verses that undergird principles of Kingdom education, Cooke (2016) posits that transformation is not about improving sinful behavior but about living in Jesus, because for God to focus on our sin nature is for Him to dishonor Jesus' sacrifice. God focuses instead on upgrading our life in Jesus, and so should we. In this view, grace is not unmerited favor but God's power for transformation. Likewise, the ability to receive forgiveness is vital for growth. Similarly, Johnson (2016) explains that now as friends of Jesus (John 15:14), our main concern is to not wound His heart as compared to not obeying Him. In addition, when we dwell in negativity we are collaborating with the father of lies (as worry, guilt, shame, etc., are the "darkroom" where "negatives" are developed).

In recent years, there have been a number of neurological findings that "validate" these biblically based Kingdom education principles and that suggest that humans are hard-wired for flourishing (Leaf 2013). For example, Jennings (2013) states that meditating on and worshipping God stimulates brain growth, memory improvement, and sharp thinking. Jennings explains that the anterior cingulate cortex (ACC) part of the brain is where empathy, love, etc., are experienced as well as where we choose right from wrong; time spent with the God of love leads to its development (39), whereas worshipping a perceived punitive-type God results in chronic inflammation (27).

Moll (2014) asserts that contemplation of and communion with God enhances emotional, mental, and physical health and diminishes negative emotions (27); the spiritual disciplines build better brain pathways and produce enhancing chemicals like oxytocin (35), which in turn enhances trust in people while diminishing defensiveness (131). Moll states that our brains are more like social organs than thinking organs (145), which explains why immersion in family-type community enhances brain and social development (44) and seeking the best for other beings brings personal satisfaction (106).

## Examples of Kingdom Education Practices

With this background understanding, we can turn to practical ways that Kingdom educators engage in the work of education. The list below provides a brief sampling of practices in educational venues that align with biblically based Kingdom education (Mason 2014; Woods 2014).

1. Authentication of *imago Dei* identity: Recognizing and encouraging strengths, aptitudes, interests, etc.; seeing good in every student; celebrating a different student's gift each day.
2. Self-talk messages: Encouraging students to engage in self-talk that is biblically positive, such as "I am His beloved," "God is good," and "No weapon against me will prosper." Working to eliminate negativity, such as "I have poor social skills—that's who I am."
3. Seeing self as God does: Helping students to understand that believers are saints even when sinning; the desires of the heart are from God, "I can do what God has assigned," and their words affect the future.
4. Practicing God's presence: Guide students in envisioning Him as always good; soaking in God's presence; meditating on His Word; praying in tongues; and changing the classroom atmosphere by appropriating His peace.
5. Creating a culture of flourishing: By giving students the freedom to pursue academically relevant interests (e.g., deep/expeditionary learning); building trust (e.g., proper use of cell phones in class); and celebrating others' successes.
6. Invitation and expectation of Holy Spirit: Help students to speak and trust in Him, invite the Holy Spirit's presence; act with belief that He is guiding; and trust Him for academic development.
7. Encouraging faith risks: Encouraging students to speak and live consistent with God's Word, even if initially challenging or embarrassing, and step into healthy challenges.

Additionally, Sarver (2017) enumerates a number of teacher practices that are consistent with Kingdom education. These include creating a "Great Commandments culture" of loving God, others, and the self; practicing the "one anothers" and the Golden Rule; having students develop a "prayer-listening-doing" journal; and tracking these activities over time for encouragement and reinforcement.

## Summary

Kingdom education is not primarily about achieving mastery (i.e., dominion mandate) over the physical, temporal, and nonpermanent environment (cf. 2 Peter 3:10–13). Actually, academics constitute the "occupying" activity while engaged in the more important endeavor of bringing God's kingdom to earth (Matthew 6:10). Rather, Kingdom education is about eliciting and edifying God's personalized nature (*imago Dei*) within each person to thereby propel them toward their God-ordained destiny (Genesis 1:26–28; Proverbs 22:6; Jeremiah 29:11). Student and teacher both then impart His kingdom, meaning both then flourish as created to be and do. Thus, the Kingdom education approach is essentially about love (cf. 1 John 4:8, 16), meaning positivity in action and viewing and treating self and others as God does. The Kingdom reflects the nature of the King, and so too must education in and for that Kingdom.

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